Selections

COLLECTED WORKS OF
MAHATMA JYOTIRAO PHULE
VOL. II

Barrister P. G. Patil

1. Son of a Primary School teacher at Kavalapur (Dist. Sangli). Lovingly nurtured and educated by Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil through his ‘Rayat Shikshan Sanstha’, Satara.

2. The recipient of the prestigious Hughlings Prize in English (Inter Arts 1942) and Ellis Scholarship in English (B.A. 1945) of the Bombay University . He is one of the eight recipients of both these Prizes in the 134 year history of the University of Bombay.

3. Studied at Willingdon College, Sangli, Fergusson College, Poona, King's College, London, and Lincoln's Inn, London.

4. Was incarcerated at Yerwada Central Prison, Poona, in 1942-43 during the 'Quit India' Movement.

5. Vice-Chancellor of Shivaji University, Kolhapur, (1975-78).

6. Member of the Maharashtra Public Service Commission, Bombay (1979-83).

7. Published ‘Karmaveeropanishad’- a book of reminiscences of Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil (in Marathi).

8. Just completed a Two-Volume biography of Karmaveer Bhaurao (in English).

9. Translated 'Selections from the Collected Works of Mahatma Phule '- (Vol. II). Vol-I (Slavery) was published on 28-11-91 .

COLLECTED WORKS OF MAHATMA JOTIRAO PHULE

VOL. II

SELECTIONS

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SELECTIONS

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MAHATMA JOTIRAO PHULE DEATH CENTENARY

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Gopinath Mundhe

Foreword

“The Universal Religion of Man is founded on Truth and Ethics, and everything else is unethical”, says Joti.

The opening lines of the Cultivator's Whip-cord are justly famous. “For want of education, intellect was lost; for want of intellect, morality was lost… etc.”

The range of his interests was vast, his intellect was gargantuan, and the sweep of his sympathy and concern was truly universal. We shall be justified in probing the historical and sociological reasons regarding the emergence of such a social activist and revolutionary in Maharashtra.

I do sincerely hope and pray that the younger generation of Maharashtra will study these ‘Selections’ reverently and will try their best to reflect and translate those noble seminal ideas into their personal lives. As W. H . Longfellow said:

“*Lives of great men all remind us,*
We can make our lives sublime-”

They should “read, learn, mark and inwardly digest” these winged words. The light shed by this 'Eternal Flame' will continue to illuminate our paths in years to come. They will cheer and sustain us in our onward march in an otherwise benighted landscape, and will even afford us a fleeting glimpse of the ‘Promised Land’ in the not too distant future.

I have great pleasure in commending these ‘Selections’ to the discerning people of Maharashtra in particular and of India in general.

SHARAD PAWAR
(Defence Minister, Government of India)

New Delhi :
18th December, 1991

COMMITMENT FULFILLED

On the recommendation of the State Committee for celebrating the Centenary of the Death Anniversary of Mahatma Fule the Government of Maharashtra has constituted a separate Committee for Publication of Source Material of Mahatma Fule's life and mission. Even then the Centenary Committee decided to publish Collection of works of Mahatma Fule in English in two volumes during the Centenary year. The First Volume namely Slavery(गुलामगिरी) was released on 28th November 1991-Death Anniversary of the Mahatma in Bombay. I am extremely happy that the Second and last Volume in the project is being brought out now. It is being released intentionally on 3rd January 1991 which happens to be Savitribai Fule's birth Anniversary(जयंती) at Naigoan, Tal. Khandala, Dist.Satara, her parents village(माहेर) at the hands of State Education Minister Shri Anantrao Thopte. The Committee is naturally happy for fulfilling the commitment in the specified. This was possible only because of the ceaseless efforts and dedication of Prof. P. G. Patil (Bar-at-Law). Both the Volumes have been translated so ably by him. Selection of 'Selections' is also his. We accepted his authority in this behalf and left the whole matter to him. It was a real stupendous task. 'Marathi' of the age more than hundred years old-that too of Mahatma Fule's 'hammer and sickle' Marathi-to be translated into present day English was a herculean task.

Barrister P. G . Patil came forward voluntarily to rescue the Committee. He even selected Mahatma's Akhands (अखंड) for translation without losing an iota of the poetic lustre of the original! Words fall short to formulate my heartfelt thanks to him. The whole congregation of pro-changers-the reformists-the radicals-the protestants not only in India but the whole of English speaking world will applaud Prof. Patil's achievement. Renaissance movements all over the world will ever remain obliged to him.

Is publishing this material stirring old brew? Whipping the dead horse? or Raking up old controversies over again? We don't think so. Firstly it is part of history-historical documents. Secondly it is bringing out the revolutionary in Mahatma Fule and his unflinching mission. Many a time Mahatma Fule is alleged to be anti-Brahmin. Was he really so?

Because of the British rule in India-which was described as 'Divine Dispensation' by Justice, Govind Mahadeo Ranade. India came in contact with the socio-economic revolutions in the Western world. Floodgates of modern knowledge were opened to the native intelligentsia. The renaissance in France-Italy and the American revolution along with the liberation of the Negroes in U.S.A under the leadership of Abraham Lincoln proved to be percolation tank for Indian Social Movements.

Mahatma Fule was naturally impressed and awed by the thoughts and messages that emanated from these historical world happenings. The plight of the Shudras and Ati-shudras (Depressed Classes) was worse than that of even Negroes. In the western Renaissance the uprising was against the CLERGY and it's domination. In India also it had to be against the CLERGY, which in the Sanatan(Hindu) Dharma(Religion) was the Brahmins. The Language of India was and is still the language of Caste based on birth. Therefore the uprising and fight against the Purohit Class appeared to be against a particular caste. Could Mahatma Fule or Babasaheb Ambedkar or other social revolutionaries of their cult be blamed for this? The fight against the Brahmanical Society which is wrongly- because of Geography-described as Hindu(derived from the word Sindhu-the river), was natural. In any given society the talk of social reform has to begin with discussion and analysis of the tenets and practices of the religion that governs that society. In India the hold of Brahmanism was a strangle-hold! The harshness of the language that revolutionaries like Mahatma Fule and Babasaheb Ambedkar had to measure up to the harshness and dominance of the system. Could a safety razor-blade be sufficient to cut down the trunk of a Babhul or Banyan Tree?

I thank the former Chief Minister of Maharashtra and present Defence Minister of India Shri Sharadrao Pawar for blessing all our efforts in a big way and writing an inspiring introduction to this Volume. I also thank the present Chief Minister Shri Sudhakarrao Naik for carrying on the torch ahead. Thanks are also due to Shri Anantrao Thopte, Education Minister and President of our Committee.

Shri Hari Narke deserves our appreciation and blessings in his untiring efforts in implementing our projects. Special mention needs to be made of Shri Mukundrao Patil, Prof. N.D. Patil, Shrimati Kamaltai Vichare and all other office-bearers.

D.T. RUPWATE,
Executive President

Bombay:
3rd January 1992
(Savitribai's Birth Anniversary)

TRANSLATOR'S SUBMISSION

I am extremely happy to present the Second Volume- "Selections from the Collected Works of Mahatma Jotirao Phule". The first Volume 'Slavery' was published on the 28th of November 1991.

Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14, 18 (second half), 19 (pp. 427-430 and p. 433) and 24 of 'The Universal Religion of Truth' have been selected. Chapter 19 contains 33 definitions of the followers of the 'Universal Religion of Truth'. Page 33 sums up succinctly the salient features of a family translating these tenets into day-to-day practice.

Mahatma Phule has sounded a clear 'Warning' to those arm-chair philosophers of his time who declared incorrectly that the 'condition of the peasants of our time was much better than what it was about thirty years ago'.

In 'Priestcraft Exposed' Jotirao has exposed the various tricks the priestly class used to practise on the ignorant and superstitious Shudras and Ati-Shudras of his time.

The last two sections of the 'Ballad on Chhatrapati Shivaji' have been included here. Jotirao declares that he is proud to sing the glories of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj who was 'an adornment to the cultivators or tillers of the soil'.

In the letter to Shrimant Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda Jotirao describes the miserable condition of the masses of his time and prays to him to take urgent steps to ameliorate the condition of his subjects.

In 'The Ballad of the Conquered Slaves' (Sections 3 and 4) Jotirao describes the pitiable condition of the masses and exhorts them to take education at any cost. He also praises Mahatma Gautama Buddha.

In 'The Untouchables Apologia' Jotirao envisages an imaginary situation-namely the visit of Her Majesty Queen Victoria to India(particularly to Bombay Presidency as it then was). When Her Majesty visits the poor hovels of the untouchables outside the village limits, a few representative Mahars and Mangs describe, in vivid terms, their subhuman conditions even under the British raj. They request her to take urgent steps to introduce modern agricultural methods here. They further request her to undertake (1)public utility works and (2)liberal educational reforms.

The opening lines of 'The Cultivator's Whipcord' 'For the want of learning, intelligence was lost' etc. are justly famous. Jotirao emphasises the sad plight of the Sudras and Ati-Shudras and exposes the tyranny, oppression and exploitation of the masses at the hands of the priestly class and the indifferent British Officers. At the end of the book, Jotirao offers a few concrete suggestions to the English Government for the improvement of the agricultural methods and operations currently used by the ignorant farmers here.

The choice of the title 'The Cultivator's Whipcord' is significant.

Appendices 'A' and 'B' to 'The Cultivator's Whipcord' are equally germane.

In the brief 'Letter to the Marathi Literary Conference' Jotirao castigates the 'ivory-tower idealists'-the so-called sophisticated men of letters-and pleads for a new brand of literature which will be universal, all-embracing and truly representative of the people.

In 'Kulambin' (a peasant-woman) Jotirao describes her wretched life and contrasts it with that of the Bhatt woman.

I have also included translations of some selected poems '(Akhands)' of Mahatma Jotirao. Mahatma Jotirao has two strings to his bow-those of Apollo and Minerva. He wields a facile pen in prose and poetry. He condemns the Government's practice of collecting the 'Local Fund' from the poor

peasants and for its failure to utilise it for the benefit of the masses. He condemns the hypocrisy of the Brahmins. He sings paeans for 'Eternal Truth'. He tenders advice to the downtrodden people. He exposes the hollowness of the Brahmin-ridden educational policy of his time. All the poetic compositions spring straight from his heart and hence instinctively 'come home to men's businesses and bosoms.'

These 'Selections' are but a sample of the rich variety of thoughts and meditations of the great social thinker and revolutionary of the 19th century. It was not for nothing that Dr. Ambedkar regarded Mahatma Phule as one of his three Gurus (the other two being Buddha and Kabir), and described him in a 'Dedication' to one of his books as 'the greatest Shudra of modern times'.

Mahatma Jotirao's heart bleeds for the lowest and the lowliest of the earth. He was a doughty champion of their cause.

If the other Mahatma's (Gandhiji's) ambition was 'to wipe every tear from every eye' Jotirao's ambition was to bring about an all-round transformation in the lives of the Shudras and Ati-Shudras. 'The nobler a soul is, the more objects of compassion it hath,' said Francis Bacon. 'The whole earth is the sepulchre of famous men' declared Pericles years ago .

I have also included in this volume Mahatma Phule's 'Memorial addressed to the Education Commission (October 1882) as also his opinions on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood (originally in English).

It is hoped that the discerning reader's appetite will be whetted to undertake a systematic study of the Collected Works of Mahatma Phule, and 'that he will think of them by day and dream of them by night.' Mahatma Jotirao Phule was, in the words of Oliver Goldsmith.

> As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm,
> Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles and its head!

I am much beholden to the following friends for their unstinted co-operation in my onerous undertaking :-

Shri Dadasaheb Rupwate, Mrs. Kamaltai Vichare, Shri Mukundrao Patil, Prof. N. D. Patil, Shri Baba Adhav, Dr. Y . D . Phadke, Prof. (now, alas! the late) R. B. Joshi, Shri Vasant Moon, Prof. G. H. Mahajan, Dr. N. B. Patil, Dr. S. G. Malshe, Shri N. S. Kulkarni, Shri D. N. Chaudhari, Prof. M. P. Mangudkar, Prin. T. K. Tope, Dr. S. D. Karnik, Shri Hari Narke etc.

I must thank warmly Shri Prakash More, the Director of the Government Press, Shri P. L. Purkar, the Dy. Director and their colleagues for their ready co-operation and unfailing courtesy in my arduous task.

P. G. PATIL
Translator.

Bombay:
11th December 1991.

JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHULE - A Brief Life-Sketch

(1827-90)

[The brief life-sketch of Mahatma Jotirao Phule is written by the noted scholar Dr.Y. D. Phadke. He is the editor of the Collected Works of Mahatma Phule in Marathi (महात्मा फुले समग्र वाङ्मय). He is also an eminent scholar of Mahatma Phule and the Satyashodhak Movement.]

JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHULE occupies a unique position among the social reformers of Maharashtra in the nineteenth century. Other reformers concentrated more on reforming the social institutions of family and marriage with special emphasis on the status and rights of women. However, Jotirao Phule revolted against the unjust caste system under which millions of people had suffered for centuries. In particular, he courageously upheld the cause of the untouchables and took up the cudgels for the poorer peasants. He was a militant advocate of their rights. The story of his stormy life is an inspiring saga of a continuous struggle which he waged relentlessly against the forces of reaction. What was remarkable was his ability to stand up against all kinds of pressure without faltering even once and always act according to his convictions. Though some keen observers of the social scene in Maharashtra like Narayan Mahadeo Parmananda did acknowledge his greatness in his lifetime, it is only in recent decades that there is increasing appreciation of his service and sacrifice in uplifting the masses.

Jotirao Phule was born in 1827. His father, Govindrao was a vegetable-vendor at Poona. Originally Jotirao's family, known as Gorhays, came from Katgun, a village in Satara district of Maharashtra. His grandfather Shetiba Gorhay settled down in Poona. Since Jotirao's father and two uncles served as florists under the last of the Peshwas, they came to be known as 'Phules'. Jotirao's mother passed away when he was hardly one year old. After completing his primary education, Jotirao had to leave school and help his father by working on the family's farm. Jotirao's marriage was celebrated when he was not even thirteen.

Impressed by Jotirao's intelligence and his love of knowledge two of his neighbours, one a Muslim teacher and another a Christian gentleman persuaded his father Govindrao to allow him to study in a secondary school. In 1841, Jotirao got admission in the Scottish Mission's High School at Poona. It was in this school that he met Sadashiv Ballal Govande, a Brahmin, who remained a close friend throughout his life.

Both Jotirao and Govande were greatly influenced by Thomas Paine's ideas and they read with great interest Paine's famous book 'The Rights of Man'. Moro Vithal Valvekar and Sakharam Yeshwant Paranjapye were two other Brahmin friends of Jotirao who in later years stood by him in all his activities. After completing his secondary education in 1847 Jotirao decided not to accept a job under the Government.

An incident in 1848 made him aware of the iniquities of the caste-system, and the predominant position of the Brahmins in the social set-up. He was invited to attend a wedding of one of his Brahmin friends. As the bridegroom was taken in a procession, Jotirao accompanied him along with the relatives of his Brahmin friend. Knowing that Jotirao belonged to the Mali caste which was considered to be inferior by the Brahmins, the relatives of the bridegroom insulted and abused him. Jotirao left the procession and returned home. With tears in his eyes, he narrated his experience to his father who tried to pacify him. After this incident Jotirao made up his mind to defy the caste-system and serve the Shudras and women who were deprived of all their rights as human beings under the caste system.

Education of women and the lower castes, he believed, deserved priority. Hence at home he began educating his wife Savitribai and opened a girls' school in August 1848. The orthodox opponents of Jotirao were furious and they started a vicious campaign against him. He refused to be unnerved by their malicious propaganda. As no teacher dared to work in a school in which untouchables were admitted as students, Jotirao asked his wife to teach the girls in his school. Stones and brickbats were thrown at her when she was on her way to the school. The reactionaries threatened Jotirao's father with dire consequences if he did not dissociate himself from his son's activities.

Yielding to the pressure, Jotirao's father asked his son and daughter-in-law to leave his house as both of them refused to give up their noble endeavour.

Though the school had to be closed for sometime due to lack of funds, Jotirao reopened it with the help of his Brahmin friends-Govande and Valvekar. On 3 July 1851, he founded a girls' school in which eight girls were admitted on the first day. Steadily the number of students increased. Savitribai taught in this school and had to suffer a lot because of the hostility of the orthodox people. Jotirao opened two more girls' schools during 1851-52. In a Memorial addressed to the Education Commission (popularly known as the Hunter Commission) in 1882, he described his activities in the field of education. 'A year after the institution of the female school, I also established an indigenous mixed school for the lower classes, especially the Mahars and Mangs. Two more schools for these classes were subsequently added. I continued to work in them for nearly nine to ten years'.

Jotirao was aware that primary education among the masses in the Bombay Presidency was very much neglected. He argued that 'a good deal of their poverty, their want of self-reliance their entire dependence upon the learned and intelligent classes' could be attributed to the 'deplorable state of education among the peasantry'. He blamed the British Government for spending profusely a large portion of revenue on the education of the higher classes. According to him, this policy resulted in the virtual monopoly of all the higher offices under the Government by the Brahmins.

Jotirao boldly attacked the stranglehold of the Brahmins, who prevented others from having access to all the avenues of knowledge and influence. He denounced them as cheats and hypocrites. He asked the masses to resist the tyranny of the Brahmins. All his writings were variations on this theme. His critics made fun of his ignorance of grammar and philology, his inelegant language and far-fetched interpretations of Indian history and the ancient texts. They brushed his criticism aside by saying that he was merely echoing what the Christian missionaries had said about the Indian society in general and Brahmins in particular. The established scholars in his time did not take Phule's arguments seriously. His critics did not realise that Jotirao's acrimonious criticism was basically a spontaneous outburst of a genuine concern for the equal rights of human beings. Emotionally he was so deeply involved in his work that he could not make a dispassionate analysis and take a detached view of the social forces. Jotirao's deep sense of commitment to basic human values made it difficult for him to restrain himself when he witnessed injustice and atrocities committed in the name of religion by those who were supposed to be its custodians.

Widow remarriages were banned and child-marriage was very common among the Brahmins and other upper castes in the then Hindu society. Many widows were young and not all of them could live in the manner in which the orthodox people expected them to live. Some of the delinquent widows resorted to abortions or left their illegitimate children to their fate by leaving them on the streets. Out of pity for the orphans, Jotirao Phule established an orphanage, possibly the first such institution founded by a Hindu. Jotirao gave protection to pregnant widows and assured them that the orphanage would take care of their children. It was in this orphanage run by Jotirao that a Brahmin widow gave birth to a boy in 1873 and Jotirao adopted him as his son.

For sometime, Jotirao worked as a contractor for the government and supplied building material required for the construction of a huge barrage at Khadakwasla near Poona. He had a direct experience of working with the officials of the Public Works Department which was notorious as a hotbed of corruption. Except the British officers holding very high positions in the Department, the clerks and other officers were invariably Brahmins and they exploited the illiterate workers. Jotirao felt it necessary to explain to the workers how they were duped by the Brahmin officials. In one of the ballads composed by him, he described vividly the fraudulent practices resorted to by the Brahmin officials in the Public Works Department (printed at the end of 'Slavery').

In 1868, Jotirao decided to give untouchables the access to a small bathing tank near his house. In his controversial book called 'Slavery' published in June 1873, Jotirao included a manifesto which declared that he was willing to dine with all regardless of their caste, creed or country of origin. It is significant that several newspapers refused to give publicity to the manifesto because of its

contents. His book ‘Slavery’ was severely criticised for its ‘venomous propaganda’ against the Brahmins. Jotirao dedicated this book ‘to the good people of the United States as a token of admiration for their sublime, disinterested and self-sacrificing devotion in the cause of Negro Slavery’. The book is written in the form of a dialogue. After tracing the history of the Brahmin domination in India, Jotirao examined the motives and objects of cruel and inhuman laws framed by the Brahmins. Their main object in fabricating these falsehoods was to dupe the minds of the ignorant and to rivet firmly on them the chains of perpetual bondage and slavery which their selfishness and cunning had forged. The severity of the laws as affecting the Shudras and the intense hatred with which they were regarded by the Brahmins can be explained on no other supposition but that there was, originally between the two, a deadly feud arising from the advent of the latter into this land. Jotirao argued that the Shudras were the sons of the soil while the Brahmins came from outside and usurped everything that was possessed by the Shudras. He also claimed that what he had described in his book was not one hundredth part of the rogueries that were generally practised on his ‘poor, illiterate and ignorant Shudra brethren’.

On 24 September 1873, Jotirao convened a meeting of his followers and admirers and it was decided to form the ‘Satya Shodhak Samaj’ (Society of Seekers of Truth) with Jotirao as its first President and Treasurer. Every member had to take a pledge of loyalty to the British Empire. The main objectives of the organisation were to liberate the Shudras and Ati-shudras and to prevent their exploitation by the Brahmins.

All the members of the Satya Shodhak Samaj were expected to treat all human beings as children of God and worship the Creator without the help of any mediator. The membership was open to all and the available evidence proves that some Jews were admitted as members. In 1876 there were 316 members of the ‘Satya Shodhak Samaj’.

Jotirao refused to regard the *Vedas* as sacrosanct. He opposed idolatry and denounced the *Chaturvarnya*. In his book 'Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak' published in 1891, his views on religious and social issues are given in the form of a dialogue . According to him. both men and women were entitled to enjoy equal rights and it was a sin to discriminate between human beings on the basis of sex. He stressed the unity of man and envisaged a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. He was aware that religious bigotry and aggressive nationalism destroyed the unity of man.

ln 1876, Jotirao was nominated as a member of the Poona Municipality. He tried to help the people in the famine-stricken areas of Maharashtra when a severe famine in 1877 forced people in the rural area to leave their villages. Some of them had to leave their children behind and an appeal issued on 17 May 1877 by Jotirao indicates that the Victoria Orphanage was founded under the auspices of the Satya Shodhak Samaj to look after these unfortunate children. From the beginning of the year 1879 Krishnarao Bhalekar, one of his colleagues, edited a weekly called Deenbandhu which was the organ of the Satya Shodhak Samaj. The weekly articulated the grievances of the peasants and workers. Deenbandhu defended Jotirao when Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, a powerful spokesman of the conservative nationalists, attacked Jotirao's writings in the most vitriolic style.

Narayan Meghaji Lokhande was another prominent colleague of Jotirao. Lokhande is acclaimed as the Father of Trade Union Movement in India. From 1880 onwards, he took over the management of Deenbandhu which was published from Bombay. Along with Lokhande, Jotirao also addressed the meetings of the textile workers in Bombay. It is significant that before Jotirao and his colleagues Bhalekar and Lokhande tried to organise the peasants and the workers, no attempt was made by any organisation to redress their grievances.

One of the charges levelled by Jotirao against the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj, the Sarvajanik Sabha and the Indian National Congress was that despite their programmes, in reality, they did very little to improve the lot of the masses.

He felt that these organisations were dominated by the Brahmins and were not truly representative in character. In his booklet called *Satsara* (The Essence of Truth) published in June 1885, he

criticised the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj. Addressing their leaders he declared, ‘We don’t need the help of your organisations. Don’t worry about us’. In his book, *Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak*, a posthumous publication, he observed that the peasants and the untouchables were not members of either the Sarvajanik Sabha or the Indian National Congress. He warned that the persistent demand made by these organisations for Indianisation of the administrative services, if accepted, would lead to Brahminisation of the services in India. He thought that it was difficult to create a sense of nationality so long as the restrictions on dining and marrying outside the caste continued to be observed by people belonging to different castes. Education of the masses would promote the process of nation-making.

It should be remembered that just as Jotirao did not mince words when he criticised the leaders of the reformist movement, he was equally fearless in criticising the decisions of the alien rulers which did not contribute to the welfare of the masses. When the government wanted to grant more licences for liquor-shops, Jotirao condemned this move as he believed that addiction to liquor would ruin many poor families. On 30 November 1880, the President of the Poona Municipality requested the members to approve his proposal of spending one thousand rupees on the occasion of the visit of Lord Lytton, the Governor-General of India. The officials wanted to present him an Address during his visit to Poona. Lytton had passed an Act which resulted in gagging the press and Deenbandhu, the organ of the Satya Shodhak Samaj, had protested against the restriction on the right to freedom of the press. Jotirao did not like the idea of spending the money of the tax-payers in honouring a guest like Lytton. He boldly suggested that the amount could be very well spent on the education of the poor people in Poona. He was the only member out of all the thirty-two nominated members of the Poona Municipality who voted against the official resolution.

Another incident also revealed his attachment for the poor peasant and his courage in drawing the attention of a member of the British royal family to the sufferings of the farmers in rural areas. On 2nd March 1888, Hari Raoji Chiplunkar, a friend of Jotirao, arranged a function in honour of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught. Dressed like a peasant, Jotirao attended the function and made a speech. He commented on the rich invitees who displayed their wealth by wearing diamond-studded jewellery and warned the visiting dignitaries that the people who had gathered there did not represent India.

If the Duke of Connaught was really interested in finding out the condition of the Indian subjects of Her Majesty the Queen of England, Jotirao suggested that he ought to visit some nearby villages as well as the areas in the city occupied by the Untouchables. He requested the Duke of Connaught who was a grandson of Queen Victoria to convey his message to her and made a strong plea to provide education to the poor people. Jotirao's speech created quite a stir.

Throughout his life, Jotirao Phule fought for the emancipation of the downtrodden people and the struggle which he launched at a young age ended only when he died on 28 November 1890. He was a pioneer in many fields and among his contemporaries he stands out as one who never wavered in his quest for truth and justice. Though he was often accused of fomenting hatred between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins, very rarely an attempt was made to consider his scathing criticism in a broad perspective. The later generations also took considerable time to understand and appreciate the profound significance of his unflinching espousal of the 'rights of man’ which remained till the end of his life a major theme of his writings and a goal of his actions.

SELECTIONS FROM THE WORKS OF MAHATMA JOTIRAO PHULE

This Mahatma was truly blessed:

(By Maharshi Vitthal Ramji alias Annasaheb Shinde)

A true follower of the Truth, this Jotiba was truly blessed!
A genuine guardian of the down-trodden,

This Mahatma was truly blessed!

A gardener (horticulturist) by caste, his deeds were like a drawn (shining) sword (Excalibur!)

An eternally vigilant tiger (for the rights) of the common masses. Tell me who can hold a candle to him? (He is absolutely incomparable!)

This Mahatma was truly blessed!

He was most forthright and outspoken in his speech (upright like a ramrod), and his conduct was firm and uncompromising and straight (like a line or an arrow). He was a protector of the Truth, and he had a deep love for true Religion.

The gardener Joti was *truly blessed* ! He was more than a match for the bookish scholars, and was a sincere champion of the helpless and the down-trodden.

Words fall short to describe his many adorable actions.

This Mahatma was truly blessed!

Traduced, vilified and persecuted he was (by his enemies) but he bore it valiantly with a smile on his lips. He exterminated the foolish superstitions (in people's minds). He made the four-fold sinister division of society appear as odious as vomit or spittle.

Some took higher education and (hence) were regarded (passed for) as scholars. Some became leaders by selling or bartering away their souls. Some begged their way to Mahatma-ship. But an honest-to-the-core servant of the people is indeed very rare! *This Mahatma was truly blessed!*

The Vedas stole (distorted the true image of) God . Hypocrites and impostors in religion rendered the true Religion as impure and spurious. Even the wise ones (scholars) were confused (by this). The blessed Jyoti (the bright refulgence) rose on the horizon at that time.

The people of Maharashtra revere and swear by *Dnyaneshwar* and *Tukaram*. Jyotiba is the (acknowledged) leader of the masses (in India).

That is why this Maharashtra is in the vanguard of social reformers (and revolutionaries), and that is its distinctive merit (feature).

The Universal Religion of Truth

Chapter 11: *Merit* (Meritorious Actions)

Balwant Hari Salwankar: What exactly is Merit? (or meritorious action)?

Jotirao Govindrao Phule: If we do not cause mental or physical torture to our fellow human beings in order to become happy ourselves--that should be called a meritorious action.

Balwantrao: How can that be so? It will be better if you will kindly explain it to me clearly.

Jotirao: If a person were to rob you of a thing forcibly or under the pretext of religion, causing you considerable anguish, with the intention of deriving great pleasure from such action, and if he were to indulge in enjoying it in your presence, would you like that person's action?

Balwantrao: I would certainly not like it, nor would anyone else in the whole world.

Jotirao: Have we, then, any right to rob human beings of a thing forcibly or under the pretext of religion and to indulge in enjoying it in their presence?

Balwantrao: We have no such right whatsoever. And there is a dictum in the (spurius) Scriptures of the earth-gods i.e. The Aryan Brahmins which clearly says "Helping others (an altruistic action) is meritorious and torturing others is sinful."

Jotirao: If this be the dictum of your Scriptures, then how is it that the earth-gods-the Aryan Brahmins--taboo-ridden, segregate themselves from others--(like menstruating women) and condemn the Christians, the Mohammedans as also all the Shudras and Ati-shudras (in our country) and subject them to all kinds of harassment?

Balwantrao: If you were to quote some public illustrations (of this iniquity), it would greatly benefit the masses.

Jotirao: *Firstly*, the Aryan Brahmins, actuated by selfish motives, indulge in flesh-eating and in imbibing wines with Englishmen at their tables to their heart's content. But when they go home they pretend to be most orthodox, criticise their holy religion (Christianity) thereby prejudicing the minds of ignorant people against them. *Secondly,* being intoxicated with youthful sexual passions, they indulge in sexual intercourse with prostitutes who can be compared to the legendary Mastani in point of youth and beauty. But when they go home, they pretend to be most orthodox (and taboo-ridden) and criticise the holy Islamic religion. They do not allow them even to touch the water in the wells, prejudice the minds of the ignorant masses against them (the Mohammedans), and thus indoctrinate their minds with hatred for them. *Thirdly,* they establish religious complexes like *Parvati* (Poona) with money contributed by the Shudras and Ati-Shudras with the sweat of their brows, move about freely as taboo-ridden, orthodox priests, and enjoy choicest delicacies and viands at ceremonial feasts to their heart's content. But they are so callous that they do not feel like giving even a morsel of stale jowar or bajra bread to the famished Shudras and Ati-Shudras who are the (authentic) tax-payers. But when they go home, they assume orthodoxy and taboos and do not deign even to touch the noble, high-born Princes like the Scindias, Holkars, and Gaekwars, dubbing them as Shudras, and hence worse than beasts, and pride themselves.

A Warning

“A person who has sustained an injury to his body alone will know what physical pain is. How can any other person know it, O ignorant (rustic) one?”

If we think carefully about the condition of India in general, we soon realise that many foreign powers (people) invaded this (fair) land of ours. The foreign invaders did precious little for the comfort and happiness of the Shudrā and Atishudra subjects here. Nothing was done (by them) for the prosperity and advancement of this land. The first to invade India were the Iranians (people from Iran) who are now called (known all over India as) Aryans or Brahmins and who conquered this land and established their rule (supremacy) here. The illustration of Parashuram’s victory and rule over India should be sufficient (testimony) . The Aryans, then, framed and promulgated totally unjust and immoral laws and regulations and codified them under the name of ‘*Manu Samhita’ (Manu-Smriti).* These laws were framed arbitrarily and always keeping in view with the selfish interests of the Aryans. They invested these ‘laws’ with the authority of a sacrosanct religion to give it special prestige and dignity. They succeeded in enforcing these iniquitous laws on the Shudras and the Astishudras here who were drowned in the vast ocean of murky ignorance. Later on, the Moslems (the Afghans, the Mughals, etc.) invaded this country.

The Dutch, the Portuguese, the French also attacked India (in the 18th century). But these invasions were not of much significance as they could establish their hold on a few pockets (areas) of India and their rule lasted here only for a brief period of time. They did not leave any imprint on the people here. Just as they did not harass the people, they did not take any steps to benefit the people either in any significance measure. Of the above-mentioned foreign invaders only two — the Aryans and the Moslems harassed the peoples — the Subject — here (the word ‘Subjects’ signifies the Shudras and the Atishudras of India here as also subsequent in this booklet). The invaders were indeed the embodiments of treachery, jealousy, cruelty and selfishness. In order to accomplish their thoughtless (and selfish) objectives, they used their rule and power as sharp whips to lash mercilessly the poor, defenceless subjects whom they had subjugated. They were not past matters in the art of torturing the subjects, as they did not take any steps to improve their lot (which would have ameliorated their condition). A cursory perusal of their history (in India) would reveal that they (the foreign invaders) tortured the poor subjects in India in the following ways: sometimes they harassed and finally killed them mercilessly for petty or non-existent crimes (supposed to be committed by them). Sometimes, they entertained carnal desires about the beautiful, high-bred, and virtuous women-folk of the conquered people (and violated their modesty, or molested or outraged them) to satisfy their lustful (carnal) desires. For petty offences committed by the subjects, the foreign invaders used to torture them inhumanely, resulting in their deaths.

The punishments which they visited (inflicted) upon the poor people here were very strange, cruel, and barbarous. A mere narration of these tortures would horrify the hearts of even the hardened among us. His heart would burst with pity for the victims and his hair would stand on end. How horrible is the punishment of condemning a man to death. The condemned person is made to sit on a sharply pointed iron pillar, and he is thrust down the length of the column until its sharp point emerges out of his head which is the height of inhumanity! Sometimes the victim is thrashed severely with whip-lashes or with a slender bough of a tree until his skin is ruptured and he bleed profusely. Then saline water or tamarind soaked in water is poured on the lacerated skin which causes excruciating pain to him, he writhes in great agony and finally succumbs to the pain. His tormentors derive sadistic pleasure in seeing him suffer his agonies. Sometimes he is hurled from the ramparts of a fort deep into the ravine below, or he is tied to the legs of an infuriated tusker (intoxicated with wine etc.) and the tusker is made to run on a rough, stony path (resulting in the victim’s death) (Readers please recall the inhuman death, indicted upon the valiant, famous Vithojirao Holkar, in the manner described above, in Poona (on 16th April 1801) by the treacherous, ungrateful Peshwa). Sometimes boiling oil or vermillion or lead was poured into the mouths of the victims which naturally resulted in their deaths. Blood-curdling punishments like those described above were inflicted on the poor, defenceless subjects for petty theft or offenses, out of sheer spite. Till recently, till the (ignominious) end of the rule of Bajiao Peshwa II the last of

the infamous (notorious) line of the Peshwas, if farmers defaulted in paying the land assessment in time, they were made to bend down publicly (in front of the *Chawdi*) with heavy stones placed on their backs, or sometimes their wives were made to sit on their bent backs and they were made to inhale the pungent, obnoxious smoke of chillies burnt under their faces. If we compare the tortures and punishments inflicted on the victims during the Peshwas' regime with those prevailing in other lands and regimes (we make bold to state that) the Peshwas' punishment would carry the palm anyway. (If we reflect on these severe punishments dispassionately) we are forced to wonder whether the law-enforcing agencies (authorities) who were the Peshwās' caste-men were constantly planning and meditating on diverse methods of torturing and harassing the poor subjects day in and day out. This was the one and only object of their constant study in devising such punishments. Their conception of punishing the subjects embraced various facets — such as beating up or whip-lashing, maiming (their bodies), robbing or various ways of harassment (mental and physical). The subjects' unhappiness gave them (the Brahmins) untold joy and satisfaction. The Brahmin bureaucracy regarded the poor subjects as less than vermin or less than dumb animals (in the field). The poor subjects, according to the Bhat, were specially created (by God) to serve the Bhat Peshwas and their caste-men as helots. These helps were supposed to till the fields and garner rich harvests, to weave clothes, to toil and moil in the burning heat of the sun, and to produce and supply diverse luxuries needed by the Peshwas and their caste-men, their women-folk, and children. too. So be it!

The Omnipotent Almighty (God) dethroned the Peshwa and the evil coterie of his caste men (counsellors) who were intoxicated with the heady wine of power and hence were persecuting the poor subjects. It was a fit and proper nemesis for their notorious misdeeds and misrule. By divine dispensation, the English rule (or supremacy or raj) came to be established here, a rule which was at once *just* and *merciful, wholesome, beneficial, righteous,* and *peaceful* - for the comfort and benefit of the long-suffering masses in India. The ryots are eternally grateful and beholden unto the all-merciful God- and they further pray to Him, "O Lord! May this regime last long! (We make this statement because) after the advent of the English raj (rule) here, the common people heaved a sigh of relief, for they were freed, at long last, from the inhuman oppression and tyranny (born of envy and jealousy) — religious, ethical, administration, and diverse other manifestations (of the same).

These days, the subjects (under the English rule) are encouraged to do things that they like - which they think are in their best interest and which are not harmful to other people. Formerly, (under the Peshwa rule) the subjects' property was vulnerable to attacks by the robbers. They lived in constant dread of high Government Officers as also of the violent marauders (robbers — i.e. the Pindaris) — enjoying the patronage of the ruling class (Kings). Hence the people were unable to use the money they had earned the hard way for their own comfort, nor could they store it safely because of so many threats and difficulties. As a result of this, the common people lost all interest in life and became slothful, idle, and indigent (impoverished). Today a people's earnings are quite safe (which they have earned the hard way). That is why they can spend them as they like, they can save them up, or can dispose of them as they like. In short, they are the undisputed masters of their earnings. That is why they have given up their slothful habits and are trying their best to acquire more and more money (for their own use). The (English) Government has introduced many goo reforms for the welfare of the subjects, and are planning to undertake many new projects beneficial to the people at large. Formerly, traveling was a great ordeal for the people, because it was fraught with many dangers. The Government has now constructed new roads and provided safety to the travelers on their journeys. So traveling has become a joyful thing for them. The Government has constructed (new) bridges for the convenience of the people, have opened many new English schools, many hospital, as also many caravanserais for the needy people. One can mention many more of such new conveniences. But there is one great project which the Government has undertaken which is truly beneficial to the people and which is commendable and eternally creditable to the Government. We need not highlight its importance to the common man. The good and valuable project undertaken by the Government holds forth a great hope and cheer before the people who have been afflicted with the curse of poverty all these years. That project concerns the bridging together (joining together) the many mountain-passes interspersed on the mountain-ranges in our land and constructing many vast lakes (percolation tanks). The Government is planning to construct many canals at different locations and to provide life-giving

water, through them, to the needy farmers' lands enabling them to cultivate those lands through all the seasons (all the year round). The Government also intends to provide clean drinking water from these lakes to the thirsty subjects who were suffering all these years (for lack of drinking water). Such a vital amenity was overdue and by God's grace, it has materialised now.

For more than a century the Bhat rulers have overburdened the poor subjects with unjust, heavy taxation, and thus have gobbled up crores of rupees (for their personal comforts), but they didn't have the goodness to spend even a farthing of this ill-gotten wealth for the welfare of the poor subjects, in all conscience. We are most ashamed to narrate the various ways in which the Bhat rulers have expended this huge amount of money. They established *temple-complexes* at different places for their own caste man and opened centres of free distribution of food (to them). As soon as the amount of taxes were credited into the treasury, the Bhat rulers would issue prompt orders to donate Rs. two lakhs to temple-complex X, Rupees fifty thousand to temple-complex Y. The case of the '*Parvati temple-complex'* (in Poona) was in a class by itself. Sweet cakes fried in wholesome ghee were served to the Brahmins and additional alms of Rs. ten per head were given to them every day. The next day, laddus were served and alms of Rs. twenty per head were given to them. The following day rice, scented with Keshar ('saffron') was served, and potfulls of alms were given to them. Two shawls each were given to the Brahmins spun dhotis, and in some instances, handsome annuities also were given to some Brahmins. In this way the Peshwas squandered away and misused the amounts of taxes contributed by the Ryots by the sweat of their brows in showering such munificence in the form of sumptuous daily feasts and liberal alms and prizes to (undeserving) Brahmins, which caused a great injustice to and heart-burning among poor ryots.

(One may well ask) were the poor ryots site well-off so as to afford to pay such (heavy) taxes to the (Brahmin) rulers? The answer is an emphatic 'No'. Words fail to describe their miserable conditions. Words fail to describe their miserable conditions. The poor Shudrās had to toil and moil on their farms throughout the year (in all the seasons - the hot summer, drenching rains and the bitter winter). They could not afford even coarse clothes to cover their bodies and coarse non-nutritive food to satisfy the pangs of biting hunger. A tattered narrow length of cloth about twenty-odd feet long, served to cover their heads with what was an apology for turbans. They covered their nakedness with tattered rough blankets all through the year. Their shoes (sandals, chapels) were cobbled up in many places and they used the shoes only in the summer months and would keep them safely in the attic to be used the next summer. They went bare-footed through the remainder of the year. They went bare-footed through the remainder of the year. They could ill-afford a piece of cloth by way of a shirt. If they purchased anything in the market (grocery, vegetables, etc.) they had to store it in their all-too inadequate piece of cloth (an apology for a shirt) or in their turbans. This, in brief, was the (miserable) condition of the ryots' dress (clothes).

We are most distressed to describe the clothes worn by the ryots' women-folk. They used to eke out their miserable existence (living) somehow, as their menfolk could afford them no joy or comfort. If they were lucky enough to get a very rough sari, worth Rs. two or Rs. two and a half, they had to make do with it for at least two years. They didn't have a spare sari. Being immersed in hard manual work (domestic chores and working on the farms), they had to wear the same rough unwashed sari for four or five days together. If they could snatch a few moments of leisure from their grinding routine of work, they used to repair to the river nearby, where they washed their saris in parts (installments), washing one half at a time, while retaining the remaining half on their bodies, to their great shame. In due course of time, the sari would be worn thread-bare. Then they would stitch up had the portion at one time and would attend to the other half at a later date. Later on, the sari would be so threadbare and tattered that the poor woman had to sew it up with multi-coloured patches (of cloth). As a result of this, one could not say, for certain, what was the original colour of the sari (which was a really patchwork quilt). Covering her body with such a tattered and patched-up piece of cloth and balancing a heavy basket of cow-dung cakes, she had to go to the public market. Alas! Alas! How painful and sad is this condition.

The Shudrās must truly be heart-broken (their hearts must surely crack) while narrating the tale of woe to their friends. They will surely say - 'Cursed be the day that we were born! It would have been much better if we had died at birth. We cannot bear the sight of our womenfolks' plight!' A man can bear intense physical agony with stoicism, but to bear the agony caused to their near and

dear ones is surely beyond human capacity. He is smitten with pain and misery at this relatives' miserable plight. But the poor ryots are truly helpless in such a quandary. One can imagine what un-nutritive and unpalatable food they must be eating. They are forced to eat dry jowar, nachni (nagali) or bajra bread, leavened with salt or chillies or onions. His vegetables are cooked but he cannot afford the luxury of a bit of oil or salt or chilly-powder to garnish them at all times. Sometimes he is forced to eat a porridge (gruel) prepared from the roughly-ground flour of jowar or nagali. Sometimes he has to eat just boiled vegetables. Sometimes he has to make do with the jungle-berriest. Worst of all he has occasionally to drink plenty of water (in lieu of food) strap his stomach with a length of cord and do hard manual labor (on an empty stomach) the whole day on the farm.

To expend the money collected as taxes from the perennially poor ryots — the money earned by the sweat of the ryots' brows — on feasting their own caste-men (the Brahmins) is a flagrantly immoral practice. If the Bhat rulers had utilised a portion of the money, thus collected from the ryots, for the constructive canals (for irrigation) on for any other projects beneficial to the people, and the rest of the money on fattening their idle caste-men, the people would have benefited by it considerably and would not have experienced the privations of scarcity of food and clothing. It would have been a feather in the Bhat rulers' caps. Had they provided irrigation facilities (by constructing canals, as suggested above) to the ryots' farms, the farmers would have reaped bumper harvests (in their farms) fairly regularly, and they would have been able to pay double or four-fold taxes to the Peshwas, who in turn would have been able to provide sumptuous feasts to still more Brahmins along with equally liberal monetary gifts to them. When the Brahmin mendicants were feasted with choice delicacies such as laddus etc. to the point of satiety, and if they still could manage to eat more laddu eaten. If the farmers' lands were irrigated, the Peshwa would have been able to reward his voracious castemen with Rs. twenty or Rs. thirty per every extra laddu eaten. But such a thought did not occur to them, deluded as they were by sheer selfish considerations.

The ryots were adversely affected for want of irrigation facilities to their farms. Hundreds (nay, thousands) of them are still suffering great hardships for lack of the said facilities. (It is a universal truth that) the farmers in countries where such irrigation facilities are not available to them are greatly handicapped (in their agricultural operations). As they have to depend entirely on agriculture for their sustenance, providing such irrigate facilities is the only way to free them from the curse of poverty. Most people are aware of the fact that ample irrigation facilities are provided to their farmers by the English (British) Government in their own country (England), resulting in an all-round improvement in the economic condition of their family Community. H.E.H. the Nizam (of Hyderabad) has constructed canals in some areas of his (princely) State, with the result that the farmers in those areas as quite well-off (economically). As such irrigation facilities were not available to the farmers in our land, agriculture, their main-stay, suffered heavily. And as a result, the common peasant who was entirely dependent on his farm for his sustenance, was the worst sufferer in the past. Irrigation is the life and soul of agriculture. So, water is truly a life-giving gift to the peasant. In the absence of such a gift or facility, he inevitably goes to the wall. Give this facility to the tiller of the soil, agriculture will be a truly economically beneficial proposition to him, howsoever rugged, allow, or gravelly (stony) his farms may be. It is no exaggeration to say that given an abundant supply of water to this farm, be it ever so rocky or fallow or rugged, the peasant will be able to grow many fruit-trees and a variety of crops on his farm even out of season (i.e. not restricted only to the rainy season). Take a tiny illustration. The lands round about the site where the Governor's palatial residence is situated i.e. at *Aundh,* were till recently thought to be unproductive, being barren, rocky and fallow-see what a miraculous transformation has taken place at the self-same spot now. The whole campus is full of orchards, flowering shrubs as also of a wealth of other shrubs, herbs, trees etc. It has now been converted into a delightful vast garden, nay, a *veritable Paradise.* (It has to be seen to be believe). It would be difficult (nay, impossible) to find any other comparable garden even in black, alluvial soil in the victim of Poona. The creation of such a fine garden on so poor (rugged, unproductive) a soil (land) is truly wonderful. A little reflection will tell us the reason. Abundant water has been supplied to this otherwise barren plot of land, through pieces from the nearby river. Hard labour put in by the labourers is also responsible for this transformation, but that is not the chief cause. *Abundant supply of water is the key to this transformation.* This clearly proves how essential it is to supply water to the farmers for their

agricultural operations, through an efficient system of irrigation. (Water, indeed, is truly life-giving)!

The farmers rightly believe that a plentiful supply of water is the key to their prosperity. (It is their true wealth). An assured supply of water ensures all disaster for them. They are impoverished and they, along with all the members of their families, fall on evil days. Some of them have to leave their homes and migrate to other areas. Some are reduced to penury and are forced to beg (food) from door to door. Some are driven to suicide. I shall now deal with the reasons responsible for this wretched condition of the (Indian) farmers.

We see the operations of the law of Nature — that if one area gets an abundant rain-fall, some other area is afflicted with drought. It is never uniform all over the country. That is why the farmers are faced with acute spells of drought every ten or fifteen years, resulting in the failure of crops. Then the farmer falls back upon the corn (grain) stored from the previous year's harvest. But that stock is barely sufficient to feed all the members of his family for six month at the most. When that is consumed, he has no money to buy even the seeds for the net sowing season. The adversity of the farmer is a golden opportunity for the Brahmin and the Marwari money lenders to fleece the poor farmer. They rejoice at the predicament of the poor, indigent farmer, with whom they ingratiate themselves with honeyed words. Some Brahmin money-lenders repair to his house and ask him solicitously — 'Hallo, dear Patil! You seem to be deeply distressed May I know the reason?. At which the poor farmer replies, "Sir, how can I explain my plight to you'? We had drought last year (which resulted in the failure of crops). So I was forced to fall back on the slender stock of grain which I had saved the year before that (two years back). Now I am totally 'broke' and the sowing season is about to begin. I am at a loss to know how to tide this crisis'. At this, the (kind-hearted!) Brahmin money-lender assures him prompts, "Do not worry at all on any count. I shall gladly lend you ten or twelve Rupees. Go and purchase the seeds (and sow them in your farm)." The poor Shudrā farmer is easily taken in by the Brahmin money — lender's sweet words'. And moreover, he is overwhelmed by his generous offer, coming from one who is a total stranger to him, and who has taken the trouble to come all the way to his (ramshackle) house to help him in his hour of dire need (with a loan of ten to twelve Rupees). The evil machination son the greedy moneylender — (to lend him the money and) to deprive him of his house and his other chattels — does not cross his simple mind at all. But he is happy at the prospect of timely help in his dire need, and begs the money-lender to advance him the said loan of Rs. ten or twelve. The (wily Brahmin) money-lender says to him, "That's O.K. Please come back to me tomorrow, with a revenue stamp-paper (bond) and do not forget to bring with you some of your relatives as also the members of your family. Rest assured I shall help you in your hour of need. I hope you won't mind me asking you to come to me with a stamp-paper (bond) tomorrow. Please do not misunderstand me at all. I trust you completely. I am not one to doubt your credentials. Both of us belong to the same village, do we not? Both of us profess the same religion (Hinduism). I would not dream of deceiving you (behave unjustly to you). You should have implicit faith in my goodness. If my intentions about you were dishonest, would I have come, of my own accord, all the way to your house, Patil, and offered to help you in all possible ways in your present predicament with a loan? Never!" He would ply his innocent mind with smooth, deceitful words, the better to persuade him to execute the bond expeditiously. The unsuspecting farmer would, then, return to the Brahmin money-lender's house the next day with the required bond-paper. The money-lender would, then, get the Kulkarni to incorporate various unjust conditions in that bond, the Kulkarni being secretly in league with the Brahmin money-lender. He would, then, ask the poor Shudrā farmer and the members of his family or his relatives to affix their thumb-impressions to the said bond. He would then, deduct Rs. two or three as the Kulkarni's fees for writing the said bond and would give Rs. nine or ten by way of a loan (instead of Rs. ten or twelve). In due course of time, the farmer would repay the amount of the loan, but the wily money-lender would charge him interest on the interest of the original loan, and a little later, a further interest on the aggregate amount (though the original loan was already cleared by farmer). Just then the farmer's son was getting married. So the money-lender would advance a further petty loan to the farmer and would force the farmer to execute a fresh bond to him for the new petty loan. The farmer was in no position to clear the debt.) So the money-lender would add the amount of interest to the original loan and get the farmer to execute a fresh bond. This (mal) practice continued for three to four years. During this period the amount of the original loan of Rs. 10/ to Rs. 12/ had stolen to Rs. 200/ or Rs. 250/-.

The only lender would then file a suit against the poor farmer for repayment of an amount of Rs. 300/- to Rs. 325/-, would get an order passed against him in the court, and just at harvest time, would insist on executing an order of confiscation ('attachment') of his hand (for non-repayment of the loan).

Alack the day! It is absolutely impossible to express in words the (harrowing) sight that meets one's eyes there. The poor, helpless and indigent farmer has toiled and moiled day and night, along with all the members of his family on his farm, throughout the year, bearing, semi-clad, the privations of hunger, in the burning heat of the sun, in pouring rain, and biting cold. Now, just when he is looking forward to the fruits of his labour (reaping a good harvest) when the (heartless) money-lender, along with his clerk and peon, appear before the farmer (in his courtyard). Just imagine the feelings of the poor farmer. No wonder, if the money-lender appears to the farmer and the members of his family as a veritable god of death (Yama) wreaking death and destruction all around — in all his terrifying manifestation -, with the clerk and the peon as his faithful, unfailing executioners, come there to strike them all dead. The terrified children's cries rend the air. The frightened womenfolk in the house begin to weep piteously and the crest-fallen and helpless farmer beats his breast and bursts into uncontrollable sobs. No wonder if they feel that a great catastrophe has befallen the. They pray to God, in their utter helplessness, "Dear Lord! We pray unto you that such a misfortune should never befall our bitterest foe at any time." When the agents of the money-lender drag out his meagre stock of corn and his other belongings in the courtyard, the hapless farmer falls at the cruel money-lender's feet again and again, and humbly supplicates him to take pity on him, but to no purpose. The farmer's wife also beseeches him (the money-lender) most piteously, "Respected Sir! We had already repaid the amount of the principal along with the interest long back. But you have charged us interest on the interest long back. But you have charged us interest on the interest of the principal (already repaid). We are most willing to repay even that amount (unjustly charged to our account). We would be most thankful to you if you could allow us some more time of grace (to clear the debt). Else, all of us will be put to a great hardship, we shall be beggared, and (worst of all), these tiny children of ours, (barely two or three years old) will starve to death. You can see for yourself, Sir, that these our children are semi-naked (as we cannot afford to given them clothing), and we find it difficult to feed them properly. If you take away our meagre stock of grains, they will be greatly inconvenienced. To whom can they appeal for succour? Respected Sir, you appear to us to be the embodiment of compassion, forgiveness, and peace. You are, indeed, and friend and champion of the helpless, and that is why you are called 'an earth-god'. So I appeal to you most earnestly and humbly (with folded hands and on bended knees) to take pity to our helpless children, and allow us to retain a portion of the food grains (that you are forcibly taking away from us now). It would be most unseemly and unbecoming of you to reject my request, out of hand, summarily." Having heard this entreaty of the farmer's wife, the money-lender was greatly incensed, and with blood-shot eyes, he said to her, "O foolish woman, how dare you, a Shudrā, teach me (pontificate to me) about this? Do you mean to say that I should write off the debt and should not try to recover it from your husband reconciling myself to such a situation?" The poor woman could not challenge his words but had to keep quiet helplessly. The other members of the farmer's daily also would beseech him humbly in that behalf. But the stony hearted money-lender would not heed these entreaties, but would proceed to accomplish his wicket design by carrying away all his belongings (pots and pans, food grains etc.). He would then sell them to someone and would deduct the amount thus realized from the original debt. The remaining portion of the debt would continue to stand in the farmer's name, as before.

The same old procedure of charging interest on the interest as also the remaining principal would continue to harass the farmer as before for four or five years to his great misconfiture for the loan of Rs. 8 or 10. He would lose his farm, his cattle, his well and the irrigated field therein, resulting in his total impoverishment. So great was his harassment and mental torture that he would be drive even to suicide. These Brahmin money-lenders had the temerity the full amount of the debt (principal) along with the interest thereon. If thy could inflict such an injustice on the poor farmer under rate benevolent rule of the English Government, my readers can just imagine how they must have harassed the helpless peasant, during the Peshwās' rule, if the took a loan of a few Rupees from a Brahmin money-lender when the rains failed that year.

During the Peshwas' rule it was not necessary (for the Brahmin money-lenders and other Brahmin officers) to file suits against the defaulting parties in the Government Courts, as the powers of the Government were exercised by the Brahmin officers at their own sweet will (arbitrarily). The money-lenders were free to belabour the tenants (debtors) and to deprive them of their possessions (food-grains and the other belongings) by brute force. They would sell his cattle in the market, would torture the members of his family, resulting, sometimes, in their deaths. These cruel persecutors (Brahmin money-lenders) would place heavy stones on the debtors' heads or backs, and would, then, make them stand in the hot burning sun. Sometimes chillies were burnt under their faces so that the obnoxious fumes from the pungent chillies would enter his eyes and nostrils. Sometimes they would apply pincers to his genitals, or would tie their hands and feet, pass a wooden rod through the tied hands, and would continue to belabour them mercilessly. The Brahmin Officers in the revenue department would also torture them in diverse ways, as mentioned above, while collecting the land-assessment from them.

Many learned and progressive Aryan-Brahmins of the days are quite convinced about the tyrannical and oppressive rule of the Peshwas. But, for fear of their own caste men they can not muster enough moral courage to confess openly that the ignorant Shudrā farmers have not been freed from tyranny and oppression of the Aryan Brahmins (i.e. the Peshwas). There are some apologists of the Peshwa rule, who, for the sake of expediency, make brave speeches in public meetings (organised by the newly forced Society — the '*Sarvajanik Sabha',* 'the People's Organisation — founded in 1870 in Poona) to the effect that the condition of the Shudrā farmers has improved considerably during the last thirty years. It is a fact that the English rule has benefited us all, (particularly the masses), but these orators conveniently ignore this salient fact, and try to emphasise minor drawbacks and shortcomings incidental to the new administrative machinery (they try to magnify those drawbacks by holding them under a microscope). There are some Aryan-Bhats (Brahmins) who profess most orthodox views and who are most partial to their own caste-men (the apologists of the Peshwa rule), are trying to invest the said Peshwa rule with feigned and imaginary virtues. It is these people who declare from the house — tops these days — "The lot of the Sudra farmers under the Peshwa rule was extremely comfortable. We can not describe it in words. We do not find even a fraction of that comfort and happiness in the life of the Shudrās these days (under the English rule). The standard of life of the Shudrās under the Peshwā rule, their way of life, their customs and social traditions were very fine indeed! The Shudrās, then, were eminently distinguished for their truthfulness, righteousness, probity, rectitude and religious piety. The Shudrā ryots were so prosperous, then, that it would by no exaggeration to say that their lives were flowing with milk and honey. (Their lives had reached the zenith of worldly prosperity). Alas! gone are those days -gone is that happiness, gone is that morality, gone is that religious piety and sanctity — and gone is that material prosperity and abundance!" I conclude my exposition of this important subject by leaving it to the good judgment and good sense of our discerning readers to find out the justification (element of truth) if any, in these two (contradictory) points of view.

15th June 1885
Peth Old Ganj
House No. 395

JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHULE

Priestcraft Exposed

Introduction

It is not necessary to write a long introduction to this booklet. The pre-eminent position that the Brahmins occupy in our society in India, and the great tyranny that they practise upon the people (the Shudras and the Ati- Shudras) is all too well- known. Some one may well ask, 'If this be so, what is the necessity (propriety) of writing this booklet?' Our answer to this (query) is that the Brahmins do not practise their venomous strategy (or stratagems) on all sections of the people with the same uniformity (wickedness). They practise their priest-craft upon the Kunbis (peasants) and the Malis (gardeners) with a special severity. People belonging to the other communities- particularly the advanced sections from these communities in the modern days-are ignorant of this wicked practice (strategy). The Brahmin priestly class are losing their pre-eminence day by day among the educated and progressive people (in our society). Such a (healthy) practice is not to be found among the Shudras. The obnoxious caste-ascendancy of the Bhats (the priestly class) that was in the ascendant during the regime of the Peshwa-Bajirao J l, is still exercising a powerful sway (over the minds of the oppressed Shudras). Mr. Jotiba's humble effort (exertion) is actuated by an earnest desire to liberate such (unfortunate) people - like the hapless Shudras from the thraldom of the said priests. Mr. Jotiba has a second motive also in writing this booklet. It is to impress (urge) upon our fair-minded and impartial English Government (rulers) the urgent necessity of educating these most useful (having initiative and drive) and industrious classes of people, open their eyes (to their sad plight) and thus liberate them from the thraldom of the Bhat priestly class. If these (commendable) objects are achieved then the exertions (efforts) of the author (Mr. Jotiba Phule) will have been amply rewarded.

(BABA PADAMANJEE)

This book ('Priest-craft Exposed')
is dedicated by the Author,
with great love, to
the Kunbis (cultivators), Malis (gardeners),
Mangs and Mahars
in Maharashtra.

"Enough of (useless) grumbling now. Enough of (useless) mortification and heart burning. (O brave Kshatriya) Banish all thoughts of revenge from your hearts. This is my special piece of advice to you."

"I entreat you, I would like to suggest to you, (that if you do not overcome thoughts of revenge), you will surely land in a great quandary (You will surely come to harm). *(Remember, your brave compatriots) jealously preserved their unity*."

(The Ati-shudras) are totally ruined. They are regarded as 'untouchables'. They are forbidden to engage in any trade, and nobody employs them (even as menial). They cannot purchase food-grains, and hence, are racked by pangs of hunger. As they have no other means of earning their daily bread (to keep the wolf from the door), they are driven to the extremity of eating the flesh of dead animals.

Totally starved. and unable to bear the pangs of hunger any more, they are forced to resort to the begging bowl (they carry the begging bowl in their hands), and beg unashamedly, for the leftovers of stale food from door to door.

They go on appealing to the lady of the house as "O respected mother", and to the master of the house as "O respected brother". They appeal piteously to all the other members of the household as also to those who happen to visit the house, (but to no avail). (No one takes any notice of their cry from the heart)

The (celebrated, liberal) religion of the Brahmims (perhaps) forbids them to serve the leftovers of their stale food (of the previous night) to the Ati-Shudras condemned as pariahs.

"Perhaps they would be committing a great sin if they serve such food to the Ati-Shudras, as per the dictates of their (celebrated) religion."

They admonish the Ati-Shudras as follows - "Do not wait at our doors, nor should you call out our names (loudly) (for food). We are fed up (sickened at heart) with your unwelcome sight (faces). Go off with you, else I will pelt stones at you."

Jotirao observes - "(O sanctimonious Brahmin), what kind of religion do you profess? What is the secret (kernel) of your religion? (You regard the Shudras as despicable) and yet you have no qualms to accept alms at the hands of the self-same Shudras! How truly wonderful your religion must be!

"(O Brahmins)! Give up your arrogance and pride, and take to the righteous path. Please consign this false (despicable) religion of yours to flames. (Your brave compatriots) have jealously preserved their unity.

"O blessed Queen-Empress! You are the Supreme (benevolent) Queen-Mother of this vast Empire.

"How is it that you are oblivious of (insensitive to, unmindful of) such a great injustice? Please release (liberate) these oppressed and depressed brethren of mine (from the Brahmins' thraldom).

"You have set a wonderful lesson to the whole world by banning (declaring as illegal) slavery (in your Empire). It will be a blot (slur) on your fair reputation (if you do not free these unfortunate brethren of mine).

"Having heard glowing reports about your far-famed reputation, I have rushed to you (for timely succour). The Brahmins (priestly class) have greatly oppressed (harassed) the Mangs and Mahars (the Ati-Shudras in our country). When will your Majesty deign to visit our country and examine their wretched condition personally?

"The English Officers have constituted themselves into a great Durbar (royal court), are secretly frightened in their hearts (in view of their tremendous responsibility), and hence have delegated (abdicated) their authority and responsibility to the Brahmin bureaucracy.
(The English Officers) are generally ill-informed (about the intricacies of administration), but they want to lord it over all the others. They lead extremely luxurious lives and stake their claims to (sumptuous) pensions.

The Mangs and Mahars (the Ati-Shudras) are greatly oppressed and persecuted, and have forgotten their (former) glorious status. (Simpletons that they are) they cannot understand the trickery and strategy of their enemies (the Aryan Brahmins).

(The Brahmins) have taken revenge upon the Ati-Shudras by condemning them to the meanset status in society (as Ati-Shudras). If they happen to touch the Ati-Shudras (whom they condemn as 'untouchables') the Brahmins rush home to take baths (to purify themselves from the polluting touch). How will they, then, dream of teaching the Ati-Shudras to read and write (the three R's)?

Jotirao has found out all these unpalatable facts (about the wretched condition of the Ati-Shudras) and, hence, he has taken the trouble to communicate their sad plight to the Queen Empress. Jotirao prays unto Her Majesty to liberate the Ati-Shudras from the trammels (of Brahmin thraldom).

Priestcraft Exposed

"You are an ocean of Compassion, O Lord! We feel impelled to confide our sorrow in you confidently. What other person, apart from you, is there of whom we should beg favours with a piteous countenance?"

Indu Prakash Press, Bombay 1869.

Fie upon your (useless) way of life. The industrious people get hot meals (food).

So-called clever ones (wise-acres) should note clearly (realise fully) (that this practice of theirs is, indeed, most discreditable to them.) Receive this as my solemn, plighted word (pledge) as I do not wish to quibble on or juggle with many words. Joti teaches (exhorts) the (priestly) scoundrels to eat an honest bread (earned by the sweat of their brows).

ABHANG

How the Brahmin Joshi (priest) robs the ignorant Shudra peasant on the occasion of a marriage ceremony.

"Do not rely on the priest belonging to another (hostile caste (i.e. the Brahmin), for by so doing you are the loser) as you incur a great loss) unnecessarily, under the guise of religion.

"Choose the referees from your own caste-juniors as also seniors-from among the friends of both the parties (to the marriage)."

"Examine very closely (carefully) the essential points regarding the age, the temperament and the mutual affection between the two parties (the bride and the bride-groom).

"The bride and the bride-groom should offer prayers to the Creator and then) should garland each other. Thus all will celebrate (the event) in true joy and happiness.

"There is no need (necessity or propriety) of the Brahmins (as priests) here (at the Shudra weddings), and should drive them (the Brahmin priests) away (forthwith), says Joti.

(4) ABHANG

How the Brahmin priest (Joshi) robs the Shudra on the occasion of the coming of age of the shudra's daughter.

The coming-of-age of the Shudra's daughter is seized upon as a golden opportunity by the Brahmin priests (Joshis).

They do not brook any delay and stand at the door (of the Shudra) impatiently.

They express a great joy by using gentle words, but they are inwardly actuated by greed of money.

They ask shamelessly the exact time (of the girl's first menstruation) and consult the almanac to ascertain the positions of the Zodiac Signs.

They undertake ceaseless recitations (of Scriptures) and other types of ritual worship (which is a hoax) and pretend to exert themselves as the dear friends of the Shudra.

They insist on a collective feast for all the Brahmins (in the village) where the choice viands are soaked in pure ghee, and exact a heavy amount by way religious alms ('dakshina').

SECTION (5)
How the Brahmin priest deceives the Shudra on the occasion of the House-warming Ceremony.

The unskilled labourers dig the foundation (of the house) in the burning sun, and carry the baskets of rubble on their heads.

The masons climb up the scaffolding, high in the air and arrange the bricks in proper order in the trenches (of the foundation).

The carpenters clamber up the scaffolding like monkeys, and join the beams and pillars (of wood) with the connecting wooden pieces.

The labourers have to perform these (hazardous) jobs for their daily bread (maintenance), and they do their allotted work fearlessly .

They have to work hard in the hot sun and hence their bodies perspire profusely and beads, nay streams, of perspiration flow from their bodies. (An impartial observer's heart) would melt with pity.

The employer (owner of the house) is greatly pleased with the labourers for their hard work, and (in his generosity) promises them all a sumptuous feast. The priests call this feast as the 'House-Warming Feast' and (are constrained to) praise the hard-working labourers (masons etc.)

The Brahmin priest, then, fixes an auspicious day for the said feast, and tempts and cajoles the owner of the house.

They compel the owner of the house to perform the religious ritual of a 'Sacrifice' (fire worship), and to give a sumptuous feast to their castemen. They also decorate the new building with lines of festoons and buntings (as auspicious marks).

They enjoy the feast to their heart's content and also skillfully deceive the host. They are very particular to demand (and receive) liberal monetary gifts by way of religious alms from the (credulous) host, without fail.

They shower blessings on the (credulous) host in the evening, and depart only after robbing the ignorant one (of money and other gifts in kind).

(As the choicest viands have been consumed by the idle Brahmin priests), the owner of the bouse and the labourers cast longing glances at (the gluttonous priests) and they eat the stale food (the leftovers of the feast) leisurely.

Thus these thugs (crooks) exploit and despoil the simple, credulous Shudra house-holders, and they demean themselves (are morally condemned), says Joti

ABHANG
(A warning to the idle Bhat priests)

Fie upon you, (may your lives be consigned to flames), (O idle priests), as you claim to eat (sumptuous meals) even before the hard-working Shudras (have had their share).

They devour so much food (a free gift) at the feast that the veins of their throats are swollen and they drink water in noisy draughts (gurgling sound)- which turns the stomachs of all.

They are most impatient while the master of the house (and his relations) partake of the (left-overs of the) feast, and if the sweet mixture of jaggery (gul) and water ('gulawani') is running short, they advise (the attendants) to dilute it with a liberal dose of water.

Thus the Brahmin priests (Joshis) rob the ignorant Shudras on the dubious authority (support) of the conjunctions of the stars and planets in the sky. Thus these (shameless) gluttons are the great enemies of the Shudras in this world.

"You should collect all your relations (and kith and kin) in a jovial get-together and should supplant all these impostors (cheats) root and branch.

A (sincere) prayer offered humbly to the Creator is a wholesome (true) meal (feast) at all times (now as ever), says Joti.

SECTION (2)
How the Brahmin Joshi extracts money from a Shudra when a child is born in his house

Chanting loudly (and rhythmically) the philosophical incantation "I am that He! Who am I?" the Brahmin Joshi enters the house of the Shudra.

He enquires of the Shudra about the time of the child's birth, and casts the child's horoscope. He, then, makes some symbolical movements of his fingers, resembling the gestures of a madman.

After making these calculations, the Brahmin Joshi informs the simple, credulous father that the new-born child is born under the inauspicious constellation of 'Mool' (origin) (which presages a great danger to all of them).

Hearing these (terrible) words of the cunning (or lying) Joshi, all the members of the Shudra's family, totally illiterate, were terrified.

The poor mother looked helplessly at her infant and cried inconsolably. The impostor (Joshi) maddened all the members (of the Shudra's family).

Seizing this golden opportunity, the crafty (Joshi) suggested to the Shudra a powerful remedy (to counteract the baleful influence of the planets). He accordingly caused some (hand-picked) Brahmins to undertake ceaseless recitations of incantations.

He further told the Shudra to give plentiful alms (in cash and kind) to ('learned') Brahmins for performing some special esoteric rituals saying, "A great calamity is likely to befall you. Try to ward if off. Do not dilly-dally."

When the (simple, ignorant) Shudra heard about this impending calamity of the unfavourable planets he thought to himself- "Let me sell off my pots and pans, and let me also borrow some money as a loan- all for my future happiness."

The Brahmins duly performed the requisite esoteric rituals as also the ceaseless recitations (on behalf of the Shudra, as suggested by the Joshi) ceremonially but, in that process, the ignorant person (the Shudra) had to incur a lot of (unnecessary) expenditure under the threat of unfavourable planets.

(Then it so transpired that) the child was down with high fever, became most restless, and promptly expired-also.

The joyful celebrations attendant on the birth of the child were overcast with a deep pall of sorrow. (Joy was turned into deep sorrow in no time).

"O Joshis! Do not defraud and deceive the (simple, credulous) people to make a sinful living (to feather your own nests), and (be sure that) God will certainly be angry with you, says Joti.

Priestcraft Exposed Section I

(The Aryan Brahmins came to India from Iran as marauders and they fought with the original inhabitants of this land and subjugated them. An attempt is made, in the following ballad, to describe the various kings and satraps (and other authorities) in India who were reduced to the status of thralls and helots. Their commander-Parashuram-exiled some of the brave warriors and condemned some other influential ones to the (ignominious) nether world. The following ballad describes how the Aryan (Brahmins) are persecuting and torturing these intrepid, valiant Kshatriyas even today)

(The whole ballad is divided into five parts, each part consisting of eight stanzas. In this rendering, the first one and a half parts are omitted - Translator)

(The Kings and Satraps of India) were given to pursuit of pleasure, and indulged in luxurious lives. The alien Aryans (Brahmins) came to know of this.

The marauders hatched a subtle plot, organised their armies, appointed Brahma as their Commander, and began a general turmoil of loot, arson and general destruction.

The Aryans overpowered some of the native chiefs, imprisoned a few others and reduced multitudes to the status of vassals (thralls). They villainously gave the pejorative name of 'Shudras ' to all those whom they subjugated.

SECTION (9)
From the booklet - "The Craftiness of the Brahmins".

The Brahmin's temperament and his duties. How he indulges in deceitful practices to satisfy his rapacity and greed.

ABHANG

To be born as a Brahmin (into a Brahmin family) in India is the best fortune. He is so parsimonious that he (wears scanty clothed and hence) resembles (the half-clad) Shudra always.

He has invested the Shudra with a 'sacred thread' and deluded him by telling him that he had become one of the 'twice-born' (i.e. the Brahmin). But, in reality there was no change in the Shudra' s condition. '

The Brahmin's natural (instinctive) temperament is mischievous and cantankerous, and it is so inveterate that it can never be eradicated.

He is very particular about his ceremonial bath, his ritual recitation of prayers, his distinctive cap and a vermillion (or sandalwood paste) round mark on his forehead (all to show off his piety), and yet he entertains cheap prostitutes.

By wearing a silken dhoti and donning a woollen shawl, he becomes taboo-ridden ('an untouchable') and disdains even to touch his -Shudra (brethren). How, then, can he be called as 'pure'?

The Brahmins forbade the Shudras even to hear (the recitation of) the Vedas but (they did not think it a pollution) and they taught (Sanskrit and vernacular languages to) the Englishmen readily.

They style themselves as the earth-gods and compel the Shudras to prostrate themselves at their feet, but (how ironic it is that) they do not think it below their dignity to prostrate themselves at the feet of cheap prostitutes.

They serve food to the Shudra from a distance (to avoid his polluting contact) but do not hesitate to drink wine under the pretext that it is required as a ritual of the Shakta sect (which permitted its followers to eat flesh, imbibe wine and have free sex).

They force the Shudras to wash their (the Brahmins') feet and further compel them to drink the (dirty) water as 'sanctified water' (from a holy place), while they kiss and fondle the Mohammedan (foreign) concubines.

Being deprived of education, the Shudra lost all his dignity (was condemned to a low status), and he was forced to take care of (carry, look after) the Brahmin's shoes.

O Shudras, now do not throw away the Brahmins' shoes that you have been carrying in your hands all these years, but now you should belabour your tormentors with the self-same shoes, and search for the Truth diligently, says Joti.

How the Brahmin priest robs and deceives the ignorant Shudra on the occasion of religious festivals.

ABHANG

The Brahmin has made the Shudra a mere farm-hand (a slave on his farm). He docs not reclease him (from that condition), and extracts from him an annual contribution by way of taxation.

The Brahmin priest's tricks should be observed carefully in the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadrapada (when the collective death-anniversaries of ancestors are observed), for he harasses the farmer's son all through his life (on account of this anniversary).

He exploits the ignorant Shudra on the occasion of the festivals of Makar Sankrant (14th of January, when the sun crosses the Tropic of Capricorn) and the New Year's day (Gudhi Padwa-the first day of the month of Chaitra), and the villainous Brahmin priest behaves in a most shameless manner. (He has taken leave of all decency!)

He lies in wait like a stork (ready to pounce upon the fish in the water) at holy places of pilgrimage, and sedulously fleeces the devout, ignorant pilgrims there (by extorting money from him).

In his leisure hours (when no religious rites are to be observed because of unfavourable positions of planets), the Brahmin priest wanders abegging from lane to lane (in the village).

He creates a bogey (a bugbear) of the baleful influence of the stars and planets in the sky (to frighten the ignorant Shudra) and conjures up a frightening scenario (a dramatic situation) out of greed and avarice.

He pummels and kicks the Shudra farmer, extorts alms from him, and finally ruins him completely.

"Do not now wait till the situation gets out of hand (becomes hopeless) but kick up a row and expose the Joshi (the Brahmin priest) in his true colours, O Shudra farmer!"

"(Now is the time) to settle all old scores un-erringly with the hypocritical impostor (the priest) (for his past misdeeds)."

"O Brahmin priests! having heard the blunt and forthright words of Jotiba, give up your nefarious practice of exploiting and despoiling the (ignorant) Shudras from now on."

DEDICATION OF THE FIRST EDITION

To the memory
of
Rao Bahadur Ramchandra Balkrishnaji (Jayakar)
President of Paramhansa Sabha,
Late Assistant Commissioner of Customs
and
Justice of the Peace,

This small book is inscribed,
As a mark of Profound Respect
And a Testimony of Sincere
Affection
by
The Author.

Poona
June 1869

Ballad on Chhatrapati Shivaji

Introduction

This ballad on Shivaji Maharaj has been divided into eight sections. For fear of digression (and avoidance of monotony) all the eight sections have not been cast in the same uniforal mode (some variety has been used). The basic material for this Ballad has been gleaned from old Mohammedan records as also the historical works of English historians like Captain James Grant-Duff, Murry etc. My object in composing this ballad is that it should be of some use and guidance to the Kunbis (farmers), Malis (gardeners), Mahars and Mangs-all of them Kshatriyas-who were condemned to the lowest and meanest levels (of society) (by the Aryan Brahmins). That is why I have scrupulously avoided the use of bombastic Sanskrit words. However I have used simple Sanskrit words to convey my meaning where it was absolutely essential (where I could not help it). I have taken great pains to use simple words which would be easily understood by the simple, unsophisticated Malis and Kunbis and have used such metres and versification as would be appreciated by those simple folk. The divine Creator of the universe is the controller and regulator of the universe, and He has endowed all of us with the intellectual faculty. Taking pity on us Shudras (in India) He has brought the British rule (raj) to India by His divine dispensation-the English people (children) beloved of Him- with the intention of emancipating us Kshatriyas from the strangle-hold of the Brahmin demons. And these kind- hearted English people have imparted the true knowledge (fundamental knowledge) to the oppressed and ignorant people like us. This blessed development has created a strong urge in our minds to free ourselves from the said strangle-hold of the cunning and treacherous plot of the Brahmins. I should like to quote a sample of the deep-laid villainy of the Brahmins in the following lines.

If we study and scrutinise carefully the histories of the different people of various nations, we are struck by a strange fact- that the Brahmins of India have elevated themselves to a high altitude (plane) (they regard themselves as a higher breed), and they hate heartily the Parabhus (Prabhu), the Kunbis (farmers), Malis (gardeners), Mangs and Mahars-as if they were their sworn enemies- and condemn them as 'lesser breeds without the law'. I used to reflect upon (think seriously about) the real reason of their hatred of and supercilious attitude to the above-mentioned categories of people in India. A careful perusal (and study) of volumes in other languages on this vexed question, and the despicable treatment meted out by the Brahmins to these people conclusively prove the following thesis. The Brahmins had no connection (affinities, ties) with India, i.e., they were aliens to India. But being actuated (inspired) by an insatiable thirst (urge) for plunder and avarice, they engaged themselves in a series of battles with the original inhabitants of India, and imprisoned those who were captured in these fights, and the Brahma-raja, the Commander of the Aryan Brahmins-reduced them to the status of serfs or slaves. In order to keep them in this thraldom of the Brahmins eternally, the same Brahma enacted wholly iniquitous and Draconian laws, being intoxicated with power, codified them into different books, taking care all the while to perpetuate many injustices and invidious provisions (against the hapless Kshatriyas). I am inclined to hazard a guess that Brahma stopped designating those 'sacred ' books as " Bhads " (invidious distinctions) and may have entitled them as the Vedas, at a suitable (appropriate) time. On the death of Brahma-raja, the remaining Kshatriyas fought twenty-one bloody battles with Parashuram to free the Kshatriyas subjugated by him (Parasuram), from his clutches, (thraldom), and hence they came to be known as 'Maha-aris' (the inveterate enemies). This nomenclature was later corrupted into ' Mahars '.

Large numbers of Parashuram's followers (soldiers) perished in the wars that Parashuram fought with the intrepid Kshatriya Maha-aris, with the (catastrophic) result that the Brahmin widows far outnumbered the male Brahmin population. Parashuram did not quite know what to do with them. (How to organize their ways of life and how to absorb them in the social framework presented difficult problems to Parashuram). A semblance of order and social harmony was established when Parashuram forbade the re-marriages of the Brahmin widows. The Aryan Brahmins (under Parashuram's leadership) then began to hate intensely the original inhabitants of India-viz. those who were condemned to the status of serfs (and helots) and the other Maha-ari Kshatriya warriors. The wicked Brahmins forbade the former to read (study) the 'Bhedas '-i.e. the Vedas, and treated the latter as ' untouchables '. These were very wicked regulations, indeed! Later on, cruel and heartless Kings like Manu, to wreak vengeance on the hapless victims, concocted and invented out

of their fertile brains, iniquitous rules, regulations and taboos calculated to serve the interests of the Brahmins, and skilfully incorporated them in their spurious scriptures. They, then, invented a further fiction that the said scriptures were 'divine revelations' (were composed by God Himself) and rammed it down the throats of the intrepid Kshatriyas who were now subjugated by the Aryan Brahmins. (They tried to imbibe this fiction on the minds of the enslaved Kshatriyas, under the specious guise of religiosity. Their villainy did not end here (at this point). They further invented the fiction of 'Shesha'-the quintessence of poisonous hatred- as a mighty serpent, fashioned him into a soft cosy bed on the waters of the ocean and made Satchidanand Narayan lie recumbent on this serpentine bed. They further invented a fiction of a lotus plant supposed to grow-out of Narayan's navel, They installed the four-mouthed Brahma-dev on it, the truly begotten son of God, and circulated the story, that this son, of God had created (compiled) all the 'Bhedas -i.e the Vedas, and enjoined upon them all to obey implicitly the commands of God's son (as enshrined in the Vedas). By means of many such figments of imagination (fictions, cock-and-buIl stories) the wily Brahmins tried to indoctrinate the simple minds of the intrepid Kshatriyas (now enslaved) with the outrageous claim that these spurious scriptures were divine revelations. They, thus, succeeded in degrading and dehumanising the brave Kshatriyas by using the potent weapon of spurious, wicked and unholy travesty of religion. All this is all too well-known. Nay, they went one step further. Flinging all canons of decency and decorum to the winds, the Brahmin authors recorded shamelessly in their scriptures the further fiction that the Shudras were sprung from the feet of this Brahmadev. To endow the feet of Brahma-dev with the miraculous capacity to give birth to the Shudra sons is, I dare say, a truly astounding fiction indeed! It is a well-known fact that it is the privilege of a woman to give birth to a child. To posit the possibility of the birth of a child from the feet of the pure Brahma-dev runs counter to the operation of the Laws of Nature. The normal function of feet is to walk, and we are asked to believe that the Shudra son was born of Brahmadev's feet. We are also asked to believe that the Brahmin was born of the mouth of Brahma-dev. If we were to accept this (ludicrous) hypothesis (theory), then the credulous disciples of Brahma-dev (the Brahmins) will have to accept the equally ludicrous hypothesis (theory) that the mouth of Brahmadev was performing a wholly novel function-viz. that of a female uterus-where a child is normally conceived). This proves conclusively that such arguments are as ridiculous as the game of make-believe played by little girls in the neighborhood (of their homes). (It is as ridiculous and un-becoming as sinful conduct indulged in secretly by women). So be it! If we subject this ridiculous hypothesis of the Brahmins to a searching scrutiny, it will expose its fraudulent nature. So rather than indulge in that fruitless exercise, we prefer to forgive them for their erroneous beliefs, and leave the rest to the good sense of our discerning readers. If our humble efforts (exertions) meet with the approval of (are welcomed by) discerning and enlightened people (readers) we shall be encouraged (heartened) to compose and publish with great JOY, some more ballads like the present one (on Shivaji Maharaj) about great Kshatriya warriors like Mhasoba (Maha Subha) who flourished in our ancient history (who were distinguished in our past history) but who, unfortunately, were condemned to the nether world (Hades) (to the meanest level) by the wily Brahmins.

While I was engaged in the task of composing this ballad (on Shivaji Maharaj), my childhood-friend Mr. (Vinayakrao Bapji) Bhandarkar who, unlike some people who tried to foil my efforts, constantly encouraged and cheered me up in accomplishing this my task in a worthy and creditable manner. I am deeply beholden unto him. I am also grateful to Rev. Baba Padamanjee and Gangadhar Shastri for dotting the 'i's and crossing the 't's (of this ballad).

A Ballad about Chhatrapati Shivaji Raje Bhonsle

(The last two sections of the Ballad have been translated here).

"Oh (Shivaji) Maharaj, speak with us, please! Why have you stopped (given up) speaking with us? You took as your companions the simple peasants (of Maharashtra). You made the (half) naked (folk) into soldiers. You braved the scorching heat of the Sun, and were not afraid of the (pouring) rains. You wandered high and low over the mountains (and through the caverns) and, thus, brought the Mohammedans to heel (subjugated them). Sometimes you resorted to plunder the (enemy's) territory, but took care to foster and encourage your own countrymen (compatriots). You displayed extraordinary intellectual powers and thereby cast your magic spell over all in tbe country. Though the state exchequer was full, he (Shivaji) was most economical in his expenditure (he managed the state finances very prudently). He allowed the soldiers a certain share in the state treasury (exchequer), as he never coveted wealth (for its own sake) (was never avaricious). He was eternally vigilant, and banished idleness and sloth (from his own life). He was ever mindful of (he never neglected) his cavalry units-be they ever so small or great. He was pre-eminently the first king among all the Kshatriyas, and nobody could hold a candle (up) to him (he was in a class by himself, non-pareil). He was unrivalled (deeply skilled) in subtle tricks and stratagems (of state-craft) and used to impress and persuade the common folk to join his side (support his cause). He was intrepid and undaunted in calamities and saved himself most skilfully and dexterously (he came off unscathed through all calamities). He used to capture forts and other territories from the enemy by resorting to secret and furtive tactics. He used to fight with (and vanquish) the traitors first, and, then, would engage himself in a great battle (with the enemy). Even when he was engulfed in (a number of) battles, he was ever mindful of his subjects, and always endeared himself to the ryots (The ryots were ever close to his heart). He was never impervious (indifferent) to the welfare of the ryots, and always enacted new laws (which were beneficial to the common people). He used to pay attention even to the meanest of the mean (among his subjects), and everybody's interests were safeguarded by him. (Nobody was neglected). He was of diminutive stature, and always relied more on resourcefulness and clever stratagems than on physical might. He had a pleasant, attractive mien and it was a veritable seal (imprint) inscribed with jewel-like virtues and graces.

He was so unassuming that he never took liberties with others, and was guileless and innocent by temperament (at home). His conversation was sweet and pleasant. He was thoughtful and reasonable (by temperament), and, thus, would establish his supremacy (over others). He strove ceaselessly for the welfare of (his subjects), and kept many of his relatives in his employ (as retainers and faithful followers). Sometimes he used to be wroth with those whom he had pampered (who were very dear to him). Having read historical records in English, I designate Chhatrapati Shivaji as a scion of the Kshatriya race, who has thoroughly exposed (made fun of, discomfited) the iniquities of the Brahma. Jotirao Phule has sung the praises of (eulogised) the son of a Shudra (Shivaji Maharaj) who was the authentic and chief overlord of the Peshwas. l chant (recite) the ballad of Shivaji Maharaj), the darling son of Jijabai, who proved to be the scourge of the Mohammedans. I, hereby, chant (recite) the ballad (Saga) of Chhatrapati Shivaji Bhonsle who was an adornment of (celebrated and famous among) the toiling peasants.

A letter to Shrimant Maharaj Sayajirao Gaikwad, Baroda State

May you kindly take pity, take pity, (on the poor and down-trodden Shudras), whom the Bhats (Brahmins) have greatly harassed (have driven to poverty).

The (venerable?) Aryan Brahmins forbade the Shudras to take education, which was the root-cause (foundation) of their wretched condition. Thus they degraded the Shudras to the (meanest) level of the beasts (of the field).

They (the Bhats) expend money (liberally) on various amusements (for merriment), but at the same time they (the Bhats) ignore or neglect (the welfare of) the Shudra women. Even (manly) persons play the roles of nautch-boys in the folk-plays and entertainments (in villages) which brings slur (discredit) to the manliness of men.

They (shamelessly) attend the musical concerts of the professional concubines, (at the latter's residences) and, thereby, soil (fling to the winds) the basic canons of morality. While they wallow in sin, they (have the temerity to) blame (find fault with) the virtuous ladies (from respectable homes). (The Peshwa and his Brahmin henchmen) squander the state revenues (contributed by the sweat of the Shudras' brows) on providing sumptuous feasts to the idle (good for nothing) . Brahmin mendicants (as in the Peshwa's 'Ramana'), while the Shudra peasants who have to toil and moil on their farms have to make do with dry bread and chilly-powder.

(Vast amounts of money are spent) on the annuities paid to the idle Brahmins, out of the state treasury (exchequer) which are, thus, depleted. (Be it noted that) the hard-working peasants fill the said exchequer with money earned by the sweat of their brows.

The peasant's bullocks are so hard worked that (occasionally) they die while engaged in rigorous agricultural operations—such as sowing, tending the crops or pulling the plough (in the field), while the (shameless, idle) Bhats (Brahmins, the priestly class) extract gifts of cows from the ignorant Shudras (on religious grounds). How can the exploited peasants ever regard these exploiters as their relatives (kith and kin)?

(Under the Peshwa's regime), the Aryan Bhats (the idle priestly class) enjoy sumptuous feasts daily, while the hard-working peasants are ever famished for the want of even dry bread all their lives.)

The Shudras pay monetary gifts as alms (in cash), with folded hands (submissively) to the Bhat priests, but the State Government never grants any public (collective) remission to the toiling peasants (in the payment of their land-assessment and other taxes.

Pairs of (ceremonial) shawls and other monetary gifts are granted (by the Govt.) to the Bhat priests and their equally undeserving children (who are no better than nautch-boys). Then why does the Govt. never give suitable awards (gifts) to the ideal farmers (for their skill in that field)?

The Govt.'s policy of charging an excise levy on the sale of wine results in encouraging vices (addicted persons). (I am most surprised at the Govt.'s callousness) about the deleterious effects of the excise levy (on the morals of the people).

The illiterate Shudras and Ati-Shudras are at a loss to understand the implications of these measures (of the Govt.) I earnestly request your Highness (Sayajirao Maharaj) to assume the responsibility of a foster-father (in loco parentis) of these dumb million (subjects).

Your Highness has shown (described) the sad plight of the hardworking (and long suffering) subjects to your Diwan (the Prime Minister). I have presumed (made bold) to pen these verses (and urged them on your Highness' attention) as you Highness is reputed to be a veritable ocean of mercy (to the down-trodden subjects).

Everyone knows that opportunity knocks on our door but once. (An opportunity, if lost once, may

not come our way again), and the (monsoon) floods do not visit (occur in) the valleys and the mountains eternally.

Only the (thirsty) soldiers fighting on the battlefield appreciate (realise) the true worth (value) of (life-giving) water there. An inhabitant of Varanasi (Kashi) is likely to regard the (sanctity of) Mother Ganges contemptuously. (Familiarity breeds contempt)

Jotirao prays earnestly unto Sayajirao Maharaj (of Baroda) that he should take the fullest advantage of the golden opportunity now presented to him. (It may not come his way again).

A Letter to Mr. Laxman Jagannath, the Diwan of Baroda

Let me first enlighten (address myself to) Mr. Laxman (Jagannath), and let me hit the nail on the head.

The Bhats (Brahmins) are fully aware of the fact that Shrimant Sayajirao Maharaj champions the cause of the Shudras heartily. Let us frustrate the evil designs of the cunning ones (the Bhats) with our appropriate (suitable) strategies (policies).

The ancestors (of the Shudras) were brave warriors using swords and shields (they had distinguished themselves most creditably on the battlefield). Let us rejuvenate (reactivate, arouse) them to their pristine glory with the aid of nectar-like Truths.

Let us strive by day and dream by might for the all-round progress and prosperity of our motherland. Let us try our best to foster a living unity between the Bhats (Brahmins) and the Mangs, and let us encourage them to inter-dine collectively. (We shall visit Gujerat again and shall deliver (enlightening) lectures there. Jotirao wishes, from the bottom of his heart, all (glorious) success to the Diwan (of Baroda) in his endeavour.

The Ballad of the Conquered (Slaves)

(1)

The wicked Aryan Brahmins conquered the original inhabitants of this land and subjugated and stigmatised them as (their hated) slaves. You were never anyone's vassals. Question the Vedas bluntly, and drag them out (in the open) publicly. The Dasyus (the so-called slaves) were, indeed, brave, pure at heart and upright in their conduct….
You were the original lords of this land, O Dasyus. Take a balanced view (think rationally) about the degradation (miserable condition) to which you have been reduced (by the Aryans). Humanity has been outraged by your degradation and nobody respects you (speaks well of you). Slavery or thraldom is most demeaning (degrading) arid the future of your children is most bleak and depressing. O Dasyus! Take a long-range view (be far sighted), and embrace (adopt) modern, rational notions. This is the gist of my exposition (*says Joti*).

(2)

The Aryans persecuted the Mangs a great deal, and sometimes buried them alive in the… foundations of (their) buildings. Those who survived these persecutions have to beg for a few crumbs (left-overs) from the Aryans' sumptuous feasts, as they have no prospects or hopeful future in their unjust dispensation. O Shudras! You have no aptitude or regard for the Truth, nor do you care for your dignity or status. Thus you have been rendered impotent (powerless) (by the Aryans). Being deprived of all power and prestige, you have fallen on evil days, most regrettably. Think carefully and introspectively (over your sad plight) …….
Though you have laboured hard in their service, sacrificing your all in the process- (heart, body and soul), and though you have protected them all along, they do not take pity on you at all. The earth-gods (the Brahmins) were pleased with you, and hence they 'liberated' you—by condemning you to tortures and indignities. How is it that you have become so servile as to prostrate yourselves at the feet of the Brahmins? If you study the Manu-Smriti, and the other (spurious) scriptures of the Brahmins carefully, you will realise the great danger lurking in them. You have experienced yourselves that the Brahmins are pleased so long as you propitiate them with liberal alms. O Shudra! the Brahmin has the temerity to insult your wife, as a slave or a serf (a household menial) under your very nose. I shall quote chapter and verse from the Vedas and prove to you O Shudras, that you were Kshatriyas once upon a time in this land of ours. Take heed (of this truth) carefully.

(3)

The Aryan Brahmins have insulted and humiliated (valiant) Kings like *Bali* who were your revered masters and ancestors, and condemned you to tortures. You are starving now, and thus you present a pitiable spectacle to the whole world. You demean yourselves by washing the feet of the Brahmins and drinking that polluted water as 'holy water'. This is the limit (height) of indignity for a truly heroic people, …….
If you neglect education, you will go to dogs (will be totally ruined) and it will be counted as a blot on your fair reputation (ancestry). The Aryans hoist their own flag of fame and victory, and make themselves merry in their petty sphere. You are Illustrious scions of illustrious parents but are imprisoned as birds in the Aryans' cages. You are so bereft of any merit, so that the world at large cannot praise you, nor can the poets rhapsodize over your worth publicly. You are penniless, you sport side-blazers, and a band of white cotton is hung about your neck as a mark of slavery. The farmer's penury is your lot at home and your womenfolk are compelled to wear rags. Even though you are advised persuasively and incessantly, you do not feel the indignity of the shackles that fetter your legs. Verily you are like the boar. You may wash it clean in the pure waters of the Ganges, but as soon as you drag it out, it promptly wallows in mire…….

(4)

I shall narrate to you, again and again, a factual story about the interest and welfare of the lot of the Shudras. I have often heard (and also experienced) about the sad plight of many Shudras for

want of knowledge (education). The illustrious Kshatriya Kings like the Scindias, Holkars and Bhosales did not realise the enormity of the Aryans' deep-laid plot. ….

The English scholars churned (the ocean of) the Vedas and revealed to us all, the esoteric secret contained in them. They exposed the erroneous philosophy of the Vedas (Scriptures), expounded the eternal Truth, and thus established the reign of *righteousness*. The Brahmins were at their wit's end (were confused), and hence some of them embraced Christianity, pretending all the while to profess Truth. The Machiavellian Brahmins often found (establish) "*People's Organisations*" in diverse places and try to enlist members by holding out a false promise (subterfuge) of promoting unity (among the people). (The Shudras should) realise the crafty nature of the Aryans, and try to search for the eternal Truth. The result of these tricks and subterfuges being practised by the Aryans will be disastrous, and hence the Shudras should think carefully about them. The (venerable) *Gautama the Buddha* defeated the Brahmins on their own battlefield, and was renowned all over the world. The Brahmins, therefore, nurse a secret grudge against the Buddha in their hearts, beat their breasts and weep and wail loudly (for their discomfiture). The Shudras are not able to join together the (radiant) flames (of rebellion and enlightenment) and stand united (against the Brahmins) in the universe (everywhere). Kindly remember the blunt and forthright words of Jotirao Phule which are pregnant with (prophetic) meaning.

The one and only religion of the Creator is the Truth. What is the use of empty learning? *says Joti.*

There is no other religion except the Truth in this world. Inform all the people of this secret, *says Joti.*

One who is adept in many languages (who is a linguist) who is rich in virtues, and who speaks the Truth does not need to be formally initiated in religion, nor does he need the protection of the reigning monarch (at that time). Age is no bar or deterrent to him. He or she regards all (human beings) as his or her brothers and sisters. He does not grow arrogant by holding heretic opinion. Truth is his chief religion, and it is faithfully reflected in his day-to-day actions, *says Joti.*

The true humanitarian religion consists in truthful conduct. The Brahmin does not know this talisman. Laxmi the goddess of wealth massages the feet of the hard-working Shudras. She never spurns them as mean farmers or labourers. If you make all others happy, all evil flies (disappears) from the world. An industrious man is the true friend of the poor, and you should strive for his prosperity, *says Joti.*

From: The Untouchables' "Apologia"

(Mahatma Phule imagines that Her Majesty Queen Victoria has come to India on an imperial visit. In the course of her royal itinerary, Her Majesty is supposed to visit a small village. She visits the wretched locality outside the village inhabited by the untouchables. Some conversation takes place between Her Majesty and the untouchables – represented by a Mang and a Mahar – of course, with the aid of an *Interpreter*. We give below a translation of the last five pages of this conversation – entitled by Jotiba as "The Untouchables' Apologia".

Then the Mahar or Mang bows down reverently before the Queen, and puts forth his point of view.

Mahar or Mang - Nearly a century has elapsed since the advent of the British rule in India. In the beginning, the British administrators came to have some idea of the privations and difficulties faced by the untouchables in northern India and in the Madras Presidency. But they were not much impressed with it. But these British Officers expressed their sorrow (deep anxiety or concern) about the sad plight of our untouchable brethren in northern India and in the Madras Presidency – privately as also publicly. When the brave, kind-hearted British administrators and officers (well-versed in the art of administration and diplomacy) got a foot-hold in Central India, they came to realise clearly the hypocritical nature of our (Hindu) religion, as also our sad plight. Some of these British administrators came to know personally in the course of their official work (transactions), the sad plight to which the untouchables were reduced as a result of the religious bigotry and tyranny (practised by the Brahmins). These they recorded carefully in their official documents. Some of them communicated their views to their personal friends while some (English) historians recorded these regrettable facts in the books of history that they wrote. They have put it on record (in these books) that the untouchables were considerably disadvantaged (and oppressed) as a direct result of the *pernicious caste system* prevalent in our society. So also the Shudras, who suffered greatly by this caste-system wished, in their heart of hearts, for the downfall of the high-caste people (the Brahmins), and waited eagerly for a suitable opportunity to vanquish them. The high-caste people (the Brahmins), priding themselves on their caste superiority became immoral and defiant. When the nationals of a country are deeply antagonised and riven by such inveterate hatred and animosity that nation (India) becomes a tempting target for foreigner' attacks and subjugation. The English historians have recorded their views to this effect in their history books.

The benevolent British Government has take many steps and measures to establish (a rule of) peace in our country. The Government must have realised that if they allowed the chaotic conditions created by an unjust and tyrannical religion in matters of day-to-day dealings In morality, in politics and in trade and commerce to remain unchecked indefinitely the Government would not last long here (would soon come to an end) (the security of the Government will be jeopardised). The high caste people (the Brahmins) will sulk and keep themselves aloof from others, priding themselves on their high caste and misplaced notions of superiority. The Shudras may well solicit our help to enable them to vanquish the hjgh-caste ones (the Brahmins) and to establish their own supremacy over them (the Brahmins).If they succeed in overpowering the Brahmins they will, then, dream of vanquishing the Mohammedans on the strength of their vast numbers aided and abetted by our (the British) valuable assistance . The next logical step would be that they would drive us (the British) away from India. It is also quite possible that the high-caste Brahmins, who were antagonised by our aid to the Shudra in putting them down might solicit help of some other foreign powers (such as the French. or the Dutch, or the Portuguese etc.) and vanquish us as also the Shudras on the battlefield, and may succeed in establishing themselves as the rulers of India. The (British) Government has undertaken many projects which would result in the welfare of the subjects as also in the furtherance of our own interests. By the grace of the Omniscient and all-just Almighty we have prospered so far in our undertaking, our rule (Government) is established on a secure foundation, and we have every reason to expect that, God willing, it will continue to be safe and secure in the years to come also.

First of all, the British Government turned their attention to the all-important task of improving and modernising Indian agriculture, and with that end in view, thought of introducing the use of the English (iron) plough here. But (we are sorry to state that) this commendable project of the

Government did not succeed. All the farmers here are the Shudras, and they instinctively feel that to substitute the wooden plough with the iron plough would be tantamount to disobeying the dictates of their forefathers, to abandoning their old (sacred) practices and to have committed a great sin. If any reforms (changes) based on physics (any scientific reforms) were to be introduced (in agriculture) the (ignorant) farmers were not willing to accept them (at all). Their old way (method) of agriculture was out-moded and conservative (not permitting any changes). If crops failed in one year because of severe drought, they did not have the means (wherewithal) to see them through till the next year. Our benevolent and just British Government fully realised the pitiable condition of the Shudra farmers here, and took many prompt steps to alleviate their misery. But (may we say that) all these good measures taken by the Government have no relation to our (economic) condition, because very few Mahars and Mangs are cultivators of the soil (as they have no land at all to cultivate). So we shall drop this subject, and consider those reforms only which are relevant to our way of life (our economic condition). Of the many reforms introduced by the British Government to improve our economic condition, there are two which are most relevant to us. They are:

(1) Public Utility Works (works which are beneficial to the public at large)
(2) Effort to provide more liberal educational facilities.

The public works are not specially beneficial to us. We Ati-Shudras are allowed to walk freely along the public highways (streets) along with the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Kunbis (the cultivators). I do not mean to imply that we have not derived any benefit from this facility. All I wish to state is that these public works are executed either by the Government Departments (P.W.D.) or by the contractors who have contracted (undertaken) to complete the job for the Government. In such cases, we (the Ati-Shudras, the untouchables) do not benefit from these works as much as the other sections of society do. The reason for this state of affairs may be as follows. (Let me hasten to add) that the Government nowhere lays down a law that employment under these public works should be provided only for a certain section of the population to the exclusion of all the others. Our religion is the chief impediment (obstruction) in our path. The Brahmin clerk (foreman, supervisor) is likely to derive more benefit (by way of greasing his palm) from the labourers belonging to the Mali (gardener) and the Kunbi (cultivator) caste than from the labourers belonging to our (untouchable), (Ati-Shudra) caste. This being the (patent) case, the Brahmin foreman (clerk) at these works takes due care to exclude us (Ati-Shudras) deliberately from the said employment, and invariably employs labourers from the other castes (such as Malis and Kunbis etc). There is another handicap also in our case. The Mangs and Mahars are not allowed to work along with the Malis and Kunbis because of the *hateful caste-system* (wherein we are treated as untouchables). We do not experience these handicaps uniformly at all the public utility works. In some cases, the handicaps are more, whereas in some other cases, there are practically no handicaps at all. Our chances of deriving benefits from these works vary in different proportions on different sites. We experience a great many difficulties in Departments which are dominated mostly by the Brahmins, and hence we do not derive any benefits there. Where this domination of the Brahmins is not too pronounced, there we are favourable placed (our handicaps are not too vexatious).

Formerly, the Municipal facilities were not available to the people in all the places (in our country). We (the Ati-Shudras) were obliged to perform sundry menial jobs (and chores) in connection with the Municipalities as at present. But (we are happy to state that) our lot is much better now than formerly, our wages are regulated and they are paid to us regularly (which is a great relief to us). The situation in the past was much worse. We did not receive any help from the Government in the matter of our wages. We were at the mercy of the people (the Brahmins and the Shudras) even for claiming wages (remuneration) for the work we used to put in there. We are happy to admit that today we are a little less ignorant than what we were in the past, and we are becoming conscious of our (rights and) condition now considerably, and are able to understand the tricks that were practised on us. The people belonging to the three high strata (sections) of society – viz., the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, as also the farmers (or cultivators) belonging to our own category (lass) detest and hate (look down upon) the menial work that we do in discharging our duties in the Municipality (such as scavenging etc). You can just imagine the quandary (crisis) these self-same people will land themselves if we were to detest our dirty work

and to boycott it (for a while). These so-called high-caste people will perish in the filth and insanitation (caused by themselves), or they will be forced to perform menial tasks (scavenging etc.) like us – the Mahars and the Mangs (Ati-Shudras). There would be no other go (alternative) for them. They will have to sweep the streets, to clean the (blocked) dirty gutters, and to make their shoes themselves (like cobblers). They will have to fashion the brooms (for sweeping). The so-called high-caste people in our society must visualise the terrifying situation (must shudder at the prospect of) just now hinted at by us, under the otherwise just dispensation of the British Government. But one thing is certain. Fearing in their heart of hearts such an eventuality or because of their helplessness in such a situation, the so-called high-caste people in the countryside are shedding off their former arrogance (are becoming humble). How we wish that the bubble of their *caste-based arrogance* would burst once for all, which would result in considerable good (benefit, happiness) to all of us.

The British Government has opened a number of schools (in our cities and villages also) with the object that the pupils should garner valuable knowledge, that the people should realise their own situation (in life), that the people should know how to conduct themselves with their fellow-men, that they should understand their duties and responsibilities (mission) in their sojourn in this world. The Government was actuated by a noble desire in opening these schools that students from all castes and communities here would attend these schools and would surely become learned, that they would realise the meaning and significance of the true Religion, and thus having become enlightened, learned and liberated, they would be inspired to extirpate *the pernicious caste-system* and its resultant evil effects. But the intention of the Government has not proved to be correct. Though the British Government was quite convinced that our orthodox religion (Hinduism) was tainted with many imperfections, they dared not take prompt and strict steps to remove those anomalies, for they knew that their interference in matters religious would endanger the safety and security of their rule (regime) and would threaten the peace and amity of the subjects. However, the (English) missionaries began their evangelical work (of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ). Though they genuinely desired to break down the evil caste-barriers and distinctions (among the Hindus), they were also preaching to the natives here to embrace their religion (Christianity). That is why their efforts also (to break down these caste-barriers) were of no avail. The joint efforts of the British Government and the English missionaries resulted in an enrichment of educational facilities to the children (of the subjects) and hence in their educational progress. The Government came to know from the reports of their (educational) Officers that the number of Brahmin pupils attending the schools far exceeds that of other (Shudra and Ati-Shudra) children in all parts of India. The number of Shudra pupils attending the schools is very meagre indeed! It is a sad fact that the Shudras and Ati-Shudra children do not attend these schools at all, because they have not got the means (the economic competence) to encourage them to do so. It is true that the Government has taken some (useful) steps to facilitate the attendance of the Shudra and Ati-Shudra pupils at the said schools such as completely free education to the children of theMaharas and the Mangs, and 5 percent free studentships to the children of the Shudras, on their tendering the applications for such concessions. A careful scrutiny of the reports of the Education Inspectors reveals the sad fact that the number of the Shudras and Ati-Shudra children attending these schools is far from satisfactory.

We must now try to find out the reasons as to why the children of Mahars and Mangs (Ati-Shudras) do not attend the (primary) schools even though the Government provides them education *free of cost*. When the Ati-Shudra children are about 5 or 6 years old, we (their parents) force them to do some menial (or manual) work. We are not in a position to allow them to laze about freely or to be able to send them to the School, as we cannot manage even to feed them properly. The reason is quite obvious. It need not be explained. We are labouring under the wrong impression that, if we were to send our children to the school, they would lose their innate sturdiness, and hence would not be able to perform their traditional jobs (or chores) as before. Even if they become educated, it is feared that they would not be rewarded suitably (unlike the children of the Brahmins and the Shudras). All this goes to prove that we have not got the economic competence to afford the luxury of education to our children. The only benefit they reap by attending the school may be an enrichment of their (bookish) knowledge, but somehow we have taken it into our heads that our children become frail and delicate (and not robust) in physique, and hence they will be unable to put in hard manual labour (that is our usual lot). Under these circumstances, how shall we dare

send them to the school?

lt is a fact that we haven't got the economic competence to acquire the minimum (academic) qualification needed for being eligible for Government service. If we are thus ineligible for securing Government service (jobs), then how can the Government provide jobs for us, and how should we expect to get them? We shall not, then, be justified in blaming the British Government for not providing Government jobs for us. Here we would like to acknowledge gratefully that it is the British Government which has liberated us from the tyranny of the Peshwa's regime, and that our condition today is much better than what it was under the rule of the Marathas (Maratha Princes etc.). We have got some rudimentary knowledge (of our present condition) and hence we have been emboldened to appear before you (Your Majesty) and to place before you most humbly our tale of woe (our sad lot). In sum, it may be stated that we do receive some assistance from the Government, but it is not sufficient to enable us to improve our miserable condition. If our compatriots (the Brahmins) who have been responsible for degrading us to this pitiable condition by their fraudulent and deceitful practices, and our other (Shudra) compatriots who have suffered a little less (at the hands of the Brahmins) but who are now in a position to extend some assistance to us, if both of them can jointly extend their helping hand to us and lift us out of the deep well (morass of misfortune) we shall, then, be able to come out of this morass and move about freely and spontaneously (as free men). Religious bigotry has ruined us completely. Our compatriots do not feel like helping us because of this regrettable bigotry. Basic decency requires that the compatriots should help their brethren {of the same nation). Not only do they (the Brahmins) not help us in any way, but they have been mainly responsible for our present plight and quandary.

It would be instructive to consider the dealings between us and the moneylenders. If we take a Joan of twelve annas from him, we have to execute a bond that we have taken the loan at an interest of four annas per rupee, per month. If we were to take a loan from the crafty moneylender at such an exorbitant and inhuman rate of interest, with the fond hope of running a profitable concern on our own, you can just imagine in what hopeless quandary we may be landing ourselves.

Supposing we were willing to send our children to the school, his schooling (education) is full of difficulties (is not smooth-sailing at all). His class-teacher as also his classmates harass him jointly. The class-teacher makes him sit apart from the other students in the class (he being an Ati-Shudra) supposedly under Government (Education Department) orders, and imparts instruction to him from a distance, and that too most indifferently. Can you call this an instance of fraternal love for one's compatriots? Thus it will be clear that under these unfavourable circumstances our children do not imbibe any worthwhile learning at their school, thus resulting in a great loss to us as also to our children. (We are the losers in the bargain).

Even half-baked pupils (who have not been properly educated) can secure Government service. But they cannot expect to serve there on a permanent basis as all their superiors (the Brahmin Officers) detest, despise and torment the Mahars and the Mangs.

At the present time we (Ati-Shudras) cannot easily take to trade (or commerce) because of our poverty and our lack of experience in that field. We are totally ignorant of trade and commerce as we are not allowed to mix freely with (associate freely with) the traders (trading community or merchants) because of *religious taboos*.

Our traditional menial work is regarded by others as contemptible, and we are forbidden to engage ourselves in any other occupation. Religion is a great stumbling block to us in our day-to-day life as also in (the choice of) our new profession (trade etc.) If we were to approach some knowledgeable traders or artisans with a humble request to teach us the rudiments of the craftsmanship we are brusquely packed off with such words as - "Who will teach an Ati-Shudra (a Mahar or a Mang) like you? You should be content with your traditional occupation (menial work) to earn your livelihood" So much about (such is the miserable fate of) our efforts in seeking new avenues of employment or trade. We are totally ignorant of (the provisions made by the Government) in their dispensation (regarding our employment). We are not able to understand if the British Government (rule) is praised or traduced (criticised) in the articles appearing in the

vernacular (Marathi) newspapers. Are we fully aware of (conversant with) the manner in which the Government administration is run (in our country)? Not at all. We have vaguely heard that there is a Parliament (an Assembly or a Council) which is in overall charge of the administration of our country. We are totally ignorant of the manner in which the representatives of the people (the legislators) are elected to this body and also of the duties they are supposed to perform. We also do not know if these legislators (MPs or representatives of the people in Parliament) fully discuss the problems facing us and take a considered decision (after due deliberations). We (the Ati-Shudras) are totally ignorant of the political problems and the political process, and we have no say whatsoever in the administration. We are also unaware of the major political problems we are faced with. Everyone speaks glibly about these (problems) and (we form our opinions) only on hearsay….

(This is the end of the manuscript-Editor)

Introduction to 'The Cultivator's Whip-Cord' by Jotirao Govindrao Phule (6th April 1883)

For want of education, intellect was lost; for want of intellect, morality was lost; for want of morality, dynamism was lost; for want of dynamism, wealth was lost; for want of wealth the Shudras were degraded (demoralised) – want of education (being uneducated) has caused all these disasters!

The object of writing this book – there are many religious and political reasons responsible for the total degradation (demoralisation) of the Shudra farmers at the present time (1883). My object in writing this book is to discuss (pin-point) some of those reasons. As almost all the Government departments are dominated by Brahmin bureaucrats, and also because of (the tenets of) spurious and oppressive religious practices, the Shudra farmers are exploited by the Bhat priestly class, and as most of the English Government officers are given to slothful and luxurious ways of life, the Shudra farmers are further exploited by the Brahmin bureaucrats (officers). My desire is that (if the Shudra farmers study this book carefully (and reflect over it), they would be enabled to protect themselves from the above-mentioned domination and exploitation. That is why I have designedly entitled this book as 'The Cultivator's Whip-Cord.'

Dear readers! The term ‘farmer' comprises three categories (1) farmer pure and simple i.e. a Kunbi, (2) a Mali (a gardener or a horticulturist) and (3) a shepherd. There are valid reasons for this three-fold classification. Those who were totally (wholly) dependent upon dry farming (cultivation of their dry and) for their livelihood were known as *Kul-wadis* or *Kunbis*, those who were cultivating irrigated land in addition to dry farming came to be called as Malis (gardeners or horticulturists) and those who owned (managed) flocks of sheep and goats in addition to the two (above-mentioned) activities came to be designated as shepherds.[1][1] These three distinct categories may have come into existence because of the nature of their respective modes of livelihood. But today we find that the Kunbis, the gardeners and the shepherds are branded as *three separate castes*. Persons belonging to these three 'castes’ *inter-dine* among themselves, but they do not *inter-marry* (among themselves).[2]

They were in receipt of pensions – a circumstance which they showed off (flaunted) (to all their friends). Thus they amass estates by earning money through devious ways. But when they pass away, their happy-go-lucky, pleasure-seeking children, who are least interested in education, squander the estate, become paupers and are forced to beg from door to door for daily bread, invoking their father’s name.

The ancestors of some of these 'prodigal sons’ had distinguished themselves as brave warriors on the battlefields or as astute statesmen and diplomats (in politics) and had won Jagirs and Inams from the Government. Some like the Scindias and the Holkars had carved out their fortunes as veritable kings. But the present descendants of some of these celebrities, being ignorant (and unlettered) are driven to the extremity of either mortgaging or selling off their Jagirs or Inams (their patrimony). They are so indigent and indebted that they do not know where their next meals would come from. (They are starving). Most of these Jagirdars and Inamdars (feudatory chiefs) have hardly any idea as to how their ancestors distinguished themselves in battles or what superhuman odds they had to overcome (to attain their positions). Having inherited their estates or properties without any intrinsic merit (not having earned them the hard way), and being uneducated, they were addicted to many vices, and spent their time, day and night, in the company of equally disreputable and profligate companions. There were very few among them who were not caught in the debt-trap (who were not indebted) and whose Jagirs were not mortgaged. There are some lndian Princes who may not be caught in the debt-trap but their retainers and hangers-on and their Brahmin advisors and estate managers are so cunning, shrewd, calculating and Machiavellian that they take every possible care to see that their masters (the Indian Princes) are not blessed with the saving graces of (a liberal) education or the civilizing influence of elevated moral virtues.

Not realising the true state of affairs regarding the hollow and unsubstantial pomp (of their

position), they mistakenly believe that their ancestors acquired their kingdoms (the principalities) with the sole intention of providing for their comforts and luxuries. Being blinded by false notions of religion, and lacking the requisite skills and capacity to carry on the administration of their principalities (estates) independently, they became rank fatalists, and were invariably led by the nose by their (crafty) Brahmin administrators (estate-managers), and they spent their days in granting gifts of cows to Brahmins, and their nights in procreating fresh progeny. These princely chiefs were certainly in a position to (were eminently fitted to) take such steps and measures as would have benefited their Shudra caste-men (subjects), but what a pity it is that such a salutary thought never occurred to them (never swam in their ken.) And as long as these Princes do not get rid of the disastrous obsession that the Brahmins are gods-incarnate for them, well-meaning efforts and persuasion to disabuse them of this delusion would be absolutely useless (would be like building a rope of sands). And supposing for argument's sake, if someone were so inclined to challenge the baleful influence of the Brahmins and their outmoded religion so powerful was the hold of the wrong notions and disastrous tenets with which they were indoctrinated (by the Brahmins) right from their childhood, that the Princes rarely had the inclination or capacity to open their minds and reflect upon the fraudulent nature of the cunning and wicked religion. The personal advisors and administrators would not take kindly to (would certainly frown upon) some exceptional princely chiefs who were impartial, enterprising and imbued with a justifiable pride for their ancestral nobility and glory. Should any Princely chief be bold enough to permit me to explain the authentic position I shall be only too happy to place before him my point of view (to the best of my ability).

So be it! If we study closely and scrutinise carefully the histories of the various countries of the world, we shall be struck be one salient and glaring fact that the condition of the ignorant (illiterate) and superstitious Shudra farmers of lndia is far worse than that of the farmers in other countries. Nay, it has reached a despicable level worse than the extreme plight of the beasts (of the field).

I need not point out that I have consulted many relevant works in English, Sanskrit and vernacular languages and drawn on my *personal knowledge* of the sad plight of my Shudra and Ati-Shudra brethren, as the foundation of my present book. It is quite clear that I would not have been able to write the present book without such valuable aid (as evidence for my book).

I have incorporated some of my researches as per my humble exertions, in the body of this book. I humbly request my learned and discriminating readers to excuse me for any defects, errors or drawbacks that they may find in this book and to accept it for what it is worth. On reading it carefully, if they find any portion of it as improper or baseless (false), or if they wish to suggest to me the names of books or references which would strengthen my thesis as adumbrated in the present book, they will kindly communicate the same to me through the columns of newspapers (the press). I shall acknowledge such help most gratefully and shall give them due weight when a second edition of the book will be brought out.

It's a pleasure to record here that when I visited Baroda, His Highness Shrimant Sayajirao Maharaj Gaikwad, Sena-Khas Khel, Samsher Bahadur (of Baroda) found time from his very tight and busy schedule of administrative work, had this book read out to him by me. With spontaneous joy and deep appreciation, he heard it very carefully to the end. His Highness accorded a warm welcome to me and extended his royal hospitality to me during my stay there. Not only that, but he also bestowed on me a handsome gift of money out of his innate generosity. I am much beholden to His Highness for all these acts of kindness and generosity.

Many (respectable) Shudra gentlemen from Poona, Bombay, Thane, Junnar, Otur, Hadapsar, Wangni, and Malis' Kurul have heard the contents of this book from my own lips (they had it read out to them by me personally) and have vouched for the veracity of the contents of the book. They have certified it accordingly under their own signatures and communicated the same to me personally.

Jotirao Govindrao Phule
Member, Satya Shodhak Samaj.

18th July 1883,
Poona.

Appendix 'A' to the "Cultivator's Whip-Cord"

(113) While I was engaged in writing '*The Cultivator's Whip-Cord*', I had occasion to talk to certain gentlemen (about the subject-matter), I quote below two such conversations, as specimens.

One who prided himself on being called a Maratha

On completing the writing of "The Cultivator's Whip-Cord" I was about to undertake some new project when a gentleman (whom I took for a Brahmin) donning a wheel-like circular Poona-turban came in and settled down comfortably before me, reclining against a bolster. He was closely scrutinising the articles of furniture and other furnishings in my office. (I could not immediately make out his caste. (If he were a Marwari (a money lender), then the three tufts of hair were not trailing out of his turban. If he were a tailor, then needles were not pricked in his turban. If he were a gold-smith then his chest was not protruding above the level of his arms, I could not say for certain that he was a Brahmin, as I had not heard him speak (even a few words). I was trying to guess from which class (caste) he hailed, when he turned to me and addressed me as follows: "I hope you know who I am?" To which I said 'No, Sir! I haven't, the honour of knowing you personally. Kindly excuse!" At which he said, "I belong to the Maratha class (clan, caste)" whereupon I said, You may be from the Maratha class, but what is your caste? The gentleman said, "I am Maratha by caste." I observed, "All the people residing in Maharashtra from the Brahmins down to the Mahars are generally called Marathas. Your answer does not give me any indication about you exact caste". The gentleman - "You may call me (suppose me to be) a Kunbi (a farmer)".

Jotirao: "What profession or vocation do you follow (pursue)?

Gentleman: Long before Shrimant Appasaheb Maharaj of Satara [the younger brother of Shrimant Chhatrapati Pratap-singh Maharaj who was deposed from the throne of Satara by the English on 3rd September 1839. Appasaheb was installed on the Satara throne (gaddi) in his place] was infatuated with the beautiful concubine Bbagubai from Limb (a village about 7-8 km to the north of Satara off the Satara-Pune highway) (ladies from our family) had succeeded in earning (extracting about Rs. Two lakhs from Appasaheb Maharaj, with great ease. We (the members of our family) are maintaining ourselves with this handsome amount so earned, fairly comfortably. Since then we have had no dealings whatsoever with the royal family of Satara.

Jotirao: Why did you condescend to call on me, please?

Gentleman: I don't want to beg any favours from you, Sir. But I understand that you are firmly of the view that the Govt. Departments are overcrowded with Brahmin officers who naturally exploit the (ignorant) farmers. You also believe, I take it, that if these officers were recruited from the ranks of the farmers, they will not, then, so exploit them (the farmers).

Jotirao: Yes, indeed! I am of the firm opinion that if the Govt. Departments were manned by officers recruited from the ranks of the agriculturists in proportion to their numbers in the population, they will be less likely to exploit their caste-men unlike the Brahmin officers.

Gentleman: How can you say so? Kindly convince me.

Jotirao: Just imagine (for argument's sake) that the Collector appoints you as a Police Sub-Inspector here. If your near relatives and neighbours – all of them farmers – are involved in same brawls and quarrels (resulting in assaults and blood-shed) and on the case being referred to you, you start investigating the true facts of the case. Will you address the accused persons rudely and insolently? (Will you 'Thou-Thou' them?)

Gentleman: Never.

Jotirao: Why not?

Gentleman: All of them happen to be my neighbours or close kith and kin (relatives). I have passed my days right from my childhood (I grew upto manhood) under their supervision (watch). How shall I, then, dare to address them rudely and insultingly?

Jotirao: Supposing, you were to accept some bribes (illegal gratification) from some of your caste-men, will you dare find the others guilty of this malpractice and will you dare fine them or inflict corporal punishment on them?

Gentleman: No, never. I will never be guilty of such a sin.

Jotirao: Why not?

Gentleman: Because my job as a Police Sub-Inspector is a passing thing (it is temporary, not eternal). Who can guarantee its permanence? Some meddlesome (obsequious) menial may poison the ears of the Collector against me, and then I am liable to be sacked. But these accused persons are my close relatives – with whom the members of my family inter-dine and inter-marry. If I were so foolish as to antagonise them now, I shall find it extremely difficult to arrange the weddings of may sons and daughters. (I can't afford to throw them on the mercy of society as unmarried -- condemn them as the religious devotees Waghyas and Muralis – dedicated to the religious service of Khandoba). My children as also theirs will have to live and work together all their lives. We are next-door neighbours. Our children and theirs play together. We draw water from the same well, river. Our farms border on theirs. Our cattle graze in the same common village-pasture. In times of emergency we borrow the scythes, the iron cross-bars or the weeding machines, the ropes, and sowing and other implements for tending the crops in the fields from one another. We borrow the services of he-buffaloes and bullocks from one another on the farms. The women-folk of our houses help one another with borrowing or giving on credit food-grains, salt or oil at the dead of night even. When any women in our households are delivered of babies, we rush to their aid and prepare temporary bath-sheds and dig trenches to sluice off the bath-water. We also hasten to provide them with cots. Our customs and rituals, our food-habits and modes of dress also are similar. We worship the same patron deity and we observe the same taboos and totems. When our houses are on fire, we rush to one another's aid to extinguish the said fires. The same funeral rites are observed among us. Formerly, all the funeral rites among the farmers were performed by themselves. It's only during the last thirty or forty years that they are performed under the guidance of the Brahmins). We help one another at funerals, and hasten to console the bereaved ones (the grown-ups and the children) and take food from our homes to them and share it with them from the same plates. (In other words, we are joined together by indissoluble ties from birth to death). Do you think that I would be so inhuman as to demand and accept bribes from my caste-men, and sow the seeds of eternal discord among our families?

Jotirao: So you should reflect carefully on this state of affairs. The Brahmin officers are not related to the Shudra farmers on point of caste, and hence they practice many frauds and deceits on the helpless, oppressed and illiterate farmers, and so they very conveniently exploit them, unlike their own caste-men (the Brahmins). Does your conscience not support this hypothesis?

Gentleman: I am not in a position to opine on this problem Just now, but 1 will make bold to state that the Shudras have produced some learned (and educated) persons. How shameful it is that they never gather together and care to debate publicly about the various ways and means of warding off these calamities that afflict the peasants. Dear Sir, these dishonest cowards haunt the homes of prostitutes (concubines), and at the same time lose no opportunity to criticise and curse the Brahmin officers (for their misdeed). But in actual fact they serve as the lackeys of the Brahmin officers and conduct themselves in a most obsequious and officious manner to them.

Jotirao: We have recently experienced a sad development. The (Brahmin) officers in the Education Department while recording their unanimous evidence before the Education commission (generally known as the ‘Hunter Commission’ on Education, 1882), did not pay any attention to (neglected) the education of the (children of the) peasants, totally misled (threw dust in the eyes of) the Education Commission and tried to hoodwink the kind-hearted Governor-General himself.

It is no wonder then that these weak-kneed, spineless, educated people from the Shudra community should have conducted themselves in that manner (referred to above).

They never pointed out the errors (lapses) of the Brahmin Officers (in the Education Department) (which they should have done). But if a Shudra did not bow down too servilely before a third-rate Brahmin clerk in the ordinary Agent's Office, he was pushed back to a remote corner at the back of the Annual Durbar, was given a garland of faded and dried flowers (generally offered to an itinerant preacher of sermon), would be sprinkled with a few drops of rose-water, rotten (low-quality) scents would be applied to his wrist and he would be bundled out with a couple of betel-leaves without lime. (In short, he would be humiliated at the *Annual Durbar* for his impudence). Am I not stating the truth? Why don't you answer me now? So be it! (as you please!) You should enquire closely into the true state of affairs, and thus equipped, come back to me to debate about (the behaviour of the) Brahmin officers (in the Government Departments) with me.

Gentleman: Now I am thoroughly convinced, Sir, that as all Government Departments are flooded with Brahmin officers, this fact results in a great detriment not only to the illiterate peasants but also to the fair name of the enlightened (English) Government. What baffles me most is the Director of Education (in the Department of Education) does not take any cognisance of this sorry state of affairs.

Jotirao: My dear friend, if you expect the Director of Education to look so closely into the intricacies and details of such malpractices, how would he be able to enjoy such a luxurious (and care-free) life?

Gentleman: Sir, if this is the deplorable condition (of the Shudra under the enlightened regime of the English Government, you can never even imagine the magnitude of the oppression and injustice inflicted upon the illiterate (hapless) Shudra peasants during the rule of the infamous Peshwas. I shall take my leave of you now. Kindly hold me dear in your heart". Having said these words, the gentleman left my house.

Jotirao Govindrao Phule
Member, Satya Shodhak Samaj.

2nd November 1882,
Poona.

APPENDIX 'B'

A Shudra Sadhu (hermit) belonging to the Kabir Bhakti (devotion) Sect.

In the afternoon of the day after I completed the Cultivator's Whip-cord (Part Three), a Shudra Sadhu (hermit) from Bombay belonging to the Kabir Sect of Bhakti (devotion), came to my house and sat down on a bench in my courtyard. He was dressed in saffron clothes, had a necklace of basil leaves (round his neck), was garrulous, and was a frequent pilgrim of Pandharpur (sacred to Lord Vitthal) (Vithoba). On being informed of his arrival, by my attendant, I came out (in the courtyard) and accosted him thus: -- "What brings you to my place, O holy man? May I know your pleasure? (What is the nature of your work with me?) I would be pleased to know all about this."

Sadhu: Are you Mr. Jotirao Phule?

Jotirao: Yes, the person standing before you bears the appellation (nomenclature) of Jotirao Phule.

Sadhu: Very fine! You are a Hindu by religion, you have studied some (religious) books in English and, of late, you have undertaken a campaign to condemn (disparage, criticise) Hinduism. I have come to meet you to convince myself (to ascertain for myself) whether the four principal Vedas - (the Scriptures) of the Hindus are divine revelations (are composed by God himself).

Jotirao: Have you ever seen for yourself (with your own eyes) these four principal Vedas of the Hindus?

Sadhu: Yes, Sir, I have seen with my own eyes these four Vedas in the house of a Brahmin.

Jotirao: Can you provide {adduce) any convincing evidence to the effect that these Vedas were composed by the Almighty Himself?

Sadhu: There is no convincing proof (evidence) about this, other than the gossips (imaginary things) indulged in by the Brahmins.

Jotirao: Let it be! Now tell me, good man, if God has a concrete, physical shape (form).

Sadhu: How can God ever have a concrete physical shape? He is the abstract Universal Soul.

Jotirao: How did the abstract Universal Soul, then, create the four Vedas?

Sadhu: The Brahmins are best qualified (fitted) to answer your query. You had better catechize the Brahmins on this score.

Jotirao: Secondly, did God create (compose) the four Vedas with the object of redeeming (saving) the whole of mankind? (all human beings?).

Sadhu: Yes, God created (composed) the four Vedas with the (commendable) object of redeeming (saving) the whole of mankind.

Jotirao: Thirdly, in which language did God compose these four Vedas?

Sadhu: God composed the four Vedas in Sanskrit, of course.

Jotirao: Fourthly, kindly enlighten me - whether all the people inhabiting the four continents as also the various islands of the earth (globe) are conversant with (know) Sanskrit?

Sadhu: Very few people (persons) inhabiting our earth (the globe) are able to understand Sanskrit.

Jotirao: This fact proves conclusively that God did not create (compose) the four Vedas to redeem

(save) the whole of mankind, as the earth (globe) is inhabited (peopled) by different peoples (nationalities) speaking scores of diverse languages. Most inhabitants of most other countries are ignorant of (do not know) Sanskrit. How can they, then, redeem themselves by studying the four Vedas? What do you have to say to this?

Sadhu: At the time that God created the four Vedas, all the inhabitants of all the continents and the islands comprising the earth (globe, universe) might have been speaking Sanskrit as the medium of communication (expression). That is why God created (composed) the four Vedas in Sanskrit. It may safely be conjectured that many diverse (different) languages may have come into vogue (practice) in the course of time.

Jotirao: How is it that God did not know (realise) that such diverse languages would come in vogue in course of time, when He created (composed) the four Vedas? Does not this fact detract from His self-evident Omniscience and Omnipresence? Though the German scholar Max Mueller (representing other English and Scottish scholars) was well-versed in (well-acquainted with) the (lore of the) four Vedas, is it not strange that he did not embrace the Vedic religion (Hinduism) while roundly condemning his own religion (of Christianity)?

Sadhu: Max Mueller may, perhaps, have been averse to wearing the sacred white thread (across his shoulders) and to practise the ritual of bathing thrice a day and ceaselessly reciting the Scriptures (of the Hindus) in the cold inhospitable climate (of Europe). That may have influenced his decision. But the real reason was best known to him alone. How can I hazard even a guess about it? (How can I say anything for certain about it?).

Jotirao: If, a: you state, God had, indeed, created (composed) the four Vedas for the redemption (salvation) of the whole of mankind, then the Bhats (Brahmins) surely would not have forbidden the Shudras and Ati-Shudras who were Hindus to study the (sacred lore of the) four Vedas. This clearly proves that the Bhats (Brahmins) had transgressed (disobeyed, flouted) the dictates of God. How, then, is it that the Creator of the Vedas turned a blind eye to this transgression? (That he chose to do nothing about it, and quietly withdrew himself into a secluded corner?) Just imagine the great loss sustained by the Shudras and Ati-Shudras all these years by this unjustifiable ban? Why should they, then, believe in the Almighty and in the four Vedas (supposedly created by Him), and further, why should they call themselves as Hindus?

Sadhu: It is the contention of most Brahmins that they never for bade the Shudras and Ati-Shudras to study the four Vedas. Many Bhat-Brahmins take the trouble to repair to the houses of the (Christian) Padre's and teach them the four Vedas-for sheer mercenary considerations-namely, to earn their livelihood. The Shudras and Ati-Shudras (whom you mention) are so poor that they cannot afford to pay the fees for the study of the Vedas. (Their poverty is to blame). How can you blame the Brahmins for this state of affairs? (What else can they do in such circumstances?).

Jotirao: This (explanation of the Brahmins) clearly proves that you are totally ignorant of the craftiness (cunning, wily nature) of the Bhats (Brabmins). But let that pass. Am I then to understand that the (Christian) Padres who maintain themselves by performing religious functions are affluent enough to pay the fees for studying the four Vedas (from the Brahmin preceptors)? And wonder of wonders, are the rulers (Princes) of Indian States-like the Bhonsles, Scindias, Holkars and Gaikwads so impoverished that they cannot afford the luxury (payment of fees} of studying the four Vedas (from the Brahmins)? How is it that not even one of these rulers has got the means (financial competence) to enable his sons to study the Vedas (by paying the necessary fees)? Do you mean to say that all these afore-mentioned Princes are worse off {poorer) then the European Padre's? O holy man! A number of (Brahmin) Vedic scholars, Sastris, Joshis and retailers of religious fables often frequent the Courts 106 of these 'Shudra' princes, and these credulous Princes are so overwhelmed and captivated by their ceaseless sermons and rituals that sometimes one of them generously bestows a Jagir (a principality) on the followers of Ramdas' cult.! Another Prince is liberal enough to feed choicest victuals (bundi-laddus) to the mendicant Bhats-(Brahmins) congregated at places of pilgrimage for a whole month at a time. A third one lavishes circular golden trinkets on the Bramhins in Poona. This proves that not all the Shudra (Princes) are impoverished. It it too much to expect that at least one of these Brahmin beneficiaries (of the

munificence of the Princes) should have used his good offices and persuaded (prevailed upon) one of these Princes to open (primary) schools, for the children of their Shudra subjects in a number of villages, so that a couple of scholars at least could have been produced from these schools? The European Padres though foreigners and Christians are far better (a thousand-fold) than these Bhats (Brahmins). The Shudras and Ati-Shudras of India are 1eading miserable lives under the tyranny and thraldom of the Brahmins for thousands of years. In order to liberate these Shudras and Ati-Shudras from this thraldom, these Christian missionaries have begged for and collected substantial donations from their countrymen, and opened schools in the Princes' States for the children of their Shudra and Ati-Shudra subjects - who hail from the same castes to which the Scindias, Holkars, Gaikwads etc. belong. These Schools have produced many scholars - who are in every way the equals of the Brahmin scholars produced by the Government-aided schools for them. The Shudra scholars are now occupying high stations (positions) in Government service, and are shouldering the responsibilities as advocates and Government officers-alongside the Brahmin Officers and advocates with great distinction. Surely they must have realised the vast difference between their past miserable conditions and their present commendable and progressive condition (way of life). But we are constrained to observe that these Shudras are very much accursed and undiscerning (un-discriminating) indeed, for though they have received so much valuable aid and assistance at the hands of the English Government they do not seem to cherish a keen desire to liberate themselves from the trammels (of the cunning Brahmins). Being apprehensive that they may lose the empty 'pomp and ceremonial stance' (their luxurious ways of life and the empty ceremonial of rank and pelf) they demean themselves (are content with) before the Brahmin officers by currying favour with them (by genuflecting before them servilely) and think that to be the summum bonum of their careers. And thus they are totally lost in their own conceit (and a mistaken sense of the goal of life).

Sadhu: If this be the state of affairs (of the Shudras), why don't you, Sir, then approach these (Shudra) Indian Princes and other Shudra noblemen (Sardars and Jagirdars) and most humbly request them (pray unto them) that they should be graciously pleased to open a number of (primary) schools in the villages in their States and enable the children of their Shudra subjects to get the healing balm of education?

Jotirao: O worthy Sir, the Courts (Darbars) of these Indian Princes are so much dominated by the Brahmin Officers that it would be impossible for a humble social worker like me to seek an audience with the ruler (of the State) to ventilate the Shudras' grievances.

Sadhu: How can you say so? There is a concrete illustration of Kusha Ghongade from Poona. This Ghongade was acting as an accompanist on the stringed instrument and singing sweetly in the folk-plays presented by the ensemble of nautch-boys at Baroda at the various performances presented in that city). He earned thousands of Rupees by his skilful performance in Baroda. If the ruler of Baroda encourages folk-artists and singers, as stated above, do you think it would be so difficult to secure an audience with His Highness and acquaint him with the sad plight of his own caste-men (the Shudras in Western Maharashtra)? You will certainly succeed in your mission, Sir.

Jotirao: Those who are in charge of the administration of the State (the Diwan and other officers) do fervently wish that the Prince should be addicted to song and dance and other types of entertainment such as folk-plays etc. Once they (the Princes) are so addicted, these officers at the Court have full freedom to run the affairs of the State as they like, and thus, they can feather their own nests without let or hindrance. They also prevail upon the Princes to arrange grand banquets in honour of the European (English) officers (dignitaries) in the State. If the Prince were to accept and act upon the sage advice and counsel of persons like me, it would naturally harm the interests of the coterie of Court Officers. If the ruler (of the State) were to spend money from the State exchequer on providing education to the children of the Shudra farmers (in the State), they would naturally become high responsible officers (dignitaries) (in place of the Brahmin officers). Thus the children of the Brahmin officers' caste-men would be driven to undertake hard, dull and onerous agricultural operations-such as ploughing (the fields). They will, thus, be forced to soil their (tender) hands with the mud and mire of the farms.

Sadhu: I never dreamt that the Brahmin Officers were capable of (would stoop so low as to) such

villainy (stratagems, wicked designs etc). But having heard your lucid exposition in this behalf now I am quite convinced of it. When the children (princes) of the Shudra rulers (of lndian States) come of age (attain the age of majority), these shrewd (wicked) Brahmin Court Officers presume to address (unsolicited) letters to the British Government (the Governor or the Viceroy) to the effect that these princes are not capable of shouldering the onerous administrative responsibilities of the said states and hence advice the English authorities not to entrust the State-administration to them (the Princes). They adopt this (immoral) course of action, for they hope that thereby the English authorities would be impressed with their (the Brahmin Officers') cleverness, and would also take note of the weakness (inefficiency, incompetence) of the said princes. They hope to be entrusted with the administration of the State. On assuming the charge of the administration, it is quite possible (probable) that they would lead the innocent princes by their noses (as if they were monkeys) and would parade them at the residences of the English authorities by day. They would also see to it that these princes were addicted to song, dance and concerts and various folk- plays by night. Thus they would have an excellent opportunity to squander the princes wealth recklessly.

Jotirao: So long as the Shudra rulers of Indian States do not realise their folly (do not come to their senses) and do not impart the healing balm of education (the elixir of life) to their own children (princes) as also to their subordinate officers drawn from the Shudra stratum of society and do not train them to shoulder the high responsibilities of office, the Brahmin Officers in the respective states (of the Shudra rulers) would continue to fleece the administration and practise their nefarious trade as before. Narrating these nefarious activities (of the Brahmins) is but time wasted. The (illiterate) Shudras are expiating their past sins (are suffering for their past lapses) and I dare say the Brahmin Officers will have to pay the penalty in full, for their blatant past sins one day (in the fullness of time, at the appropriate time.) (The wheel will, surely, come full circle, sooner or later)

Sadhu: May I take my leave of you now, Sir?

Jotirao: As you please. Good-bye !

Joti Govind Phule
Member, Satya Shodhak Samaj.
Poona 6th April 1883.

A Letter To The Marathi Literary Conference

(Mahatma Phule had sent a letter, through Mr. Justice M.G. Ranade, to the Marathi Literary Conference. It is reproduced here from the 'Dnyānodaya' a Marathi Christian fortnightly (dated 11th June 1885)

Sir,

I am in due receipt of your kind letter, along with the circular, dated the 13th inst. But my dear bustling busybody of a big brother, please note that there are some people (in Maharashtra) who do not think dispassionately about the problem of the Human Rights of all human beingE and who are unwilling to grant them those rights openly and voluntarily, and if their present behaviour is any indication, they are not likely to grant them those Human Rights even in the future. (Please note that) the Societies established by us and the books published by us are .diametrically opposed to the Societies founded by the above-mentioned (retrograde) people and to the contents of the books published by them. They have designedly and wickedly suppressed (omitted) from their spurious sacred books the shameful episode (event) of how their ancestors subjugated us (the Shudras and Ati-Shudras) and converted us into serfs, to wreak their vengeance on us (vindictively). Their ancient and mischievous Scriptures will bear ample testimony to this our charge. The Brahmin authors who are hopelessly out of touch with the grim reality on the ground (who dwell in ivory towers, who are visionaries, who are just wiseacres), and the Brahmin orators who wax eloquent at their coteries and public meetings, are surely ignorant of the harrowing hardships which the Shudras and Ati-Shudras have had to undergo all these years. The Founder of the 'Sarvajanik Sabha ' (Public Social Organisation' founded in Poona in 1870) knows all about this sorry state of affairs. But he turned a blind eye to this tragic situation, as he had to guard his own ephemeral interests as also those of his children. So as soon as he retired from the (English) Govt. service on a pension, most surprisingly and regrettably, he became a rank communalist, a confirmed idolater and utterly taboo-ridden and began to look down upon his Shudra and AtiShudra brethren. He went one step further. He regarded it as a stark heresy (as an unmitigated sin or pollution) even to touch the paper currency (printed by the Govt. which had sanctioned him his pension) even after taking his ceremonial ablutions etc. So it is useless to expect these (retrograde) Aryan Brahmins to exert themselves for the prosperity of this hapless land of ours! So be it! (We should now resolve) that we Shudras will not _be deceived (hoodwinked) by the false promises of the Brahmins who have battened themselves by exploiting us (Shudras). We Shudras and Ati-Shudras must deliberate carefully and conclude (decide) that we do not stand to gain anything by joining hands with them (the Brahmin authors). If those big bullies sincerely desire that all of us should be united (be of one mind), then they should strive to find ways and means of promoting eternal fraternal love and amity among a11 human beings (mankind) and they should publish it in book-form. Negligence and apathy on our part at this critical moment will be only at our peril. I leave it now to their (the Shudras' and Atishudras ') sweet will and pleasure. This tiny epistle of mine which embodies my views (on this vital point) may please be forwarded to the Marathi Literary Conference for its earnest consideration. Please accept this first salutation of an elderly person tendered in good faith.

Your friend,
JOTIRAO G. PHULE
('Dnyānodaya', dated 11th June, 1885).

A Poem by Mahatma Phule, which was hitherto unpublished

(Brought to light for the first time by Dr. Y.D. Phadke and printed in the Maharashtra Times' (Sunday edition dated 23rd September 1990). It contains thirteen stanzas].

A Peasant Woman (Kulambin)

(1)

The Shudra's wife has to sit at the grinding stones (to grind the corn into flour) at the first cock-crow (at early dawn). Her husband Is awakened by the noise (sound) of the rural ditties she sings while grinding the corn and takes his bullock to graze in the pasture. She has to sweep the cow-shed, collect the cow-dung in baskets and carry the whole lot in baskets on her head and deposit them on the dunghill. Though she does not lack in any virtues, the cunning Brahmin calls her by the contemptuous name of 'a peasant woman', *says Joti.*

(2)

She kneads the jowar-flour and beats (pats) it into pieces of bread, at sun-rise. (It is an earthen-ware hearth, with one central opening where the fuel-wood (cow-dung etc) is fed, and it has one or two more openings on either side on which cooking pots can be placed. They are known as 'Awails' or Wails'. On the central (main) open space the oven or other cooking pots can be placed. Thus these two or three openings can be used for cooking simultaneously). She cooks curry in a pot conveniently placed on either opening. Once the cooking if, over, she puts the pieces of bread and the pot of curry in a basket, puts the basket on her head and proceeds to the farm. She works on the farm along with all others, and (cannot find time to) does not partake of food with the1n, but eats her food , on her return at home. She makes gifts of the corn to the beggars and the Brahmins, and thus maintains (feeds) the earth-gods (the Brahmins), *says Joti.*

(3)

There is rarely the ceremonial sweeping and sprinkling of water in the courtyard of a Shudra's house. Nor is there the holy basil plant (Tulsi) in the courtyard. The Shudra has no time for such frivolous tricks. She does not (find time to) comb her hair and her body is sticky with perspiration. She hates all finery and finicking. She has to make do with one rough (home-spun) sari, and is quite content with porridge and buttermilk. The Bhats laugh at tbe Bhat widow and (unnecessarily) blame her (for her plight), *says Joti.*

(4)

She has to carry the pails (pots) of water at her waist, and has to mix the dry leaves (rubbish) in the cow-dung. She tucks up her sari carefully and mixes the cow-dung evenly with her bare feet. She, then, turns this into cow-dung cakes (pats) in the burning sun. The poor hard-working peasant-woman cannot afford the luxury of sitting on a swing in the cool shade like the Bhat woman. (The Brahmins) call such a hard-working woman as a 'peasant-woman' and lord it over others (as masters), *says Joti.*

(5)

Carrying cow-dung cakes in a meshed-fabric of twine (or rope) on her head, and balancing her tiny child on her back, the Shudra woman wanders from lane to lane hawking the said cow-dung cakes, for her maintenance. She does not worship any idols like a Bhatji. She walks erect and dignified and wears an ornament in her hair. The cunning (wicked) Brahmin calls her by the disparaging name of 'a peasant-woman', which is really an affront to any human being, *says Joti.*

(6)

She walks behind the sowing implement, sowing tur (a pulse) and, thus, helps her husband in his sowing operation. She helps her husband faithfully in stormy wind or driving rain. She holds the string to help (her husband) and plants the saplings at the marked portions (of the string) (in the black soil). The untruthful (false) Brahmin calls her by the disparaging name of a 'peasant-woman', who, in fact, is very industrious (hardworking), *says Joti.*

(7)

The wives of the Kshatriyas (farmers) have to tighten their stomach (with a piece of cloth) and remove the weeds (grass) (in the crops) in the field. She is so busy with her work in the field (so lost is she in her work) that she forgets even to suckle her child which cries piteously. She munches the long (chawali) beans when she picks them up in the course of her work (on the farm), and then, goes to suckle her child. She sells the grass (which she has mown) and contributes her mite to defray the family expenses. Thus she gives an object-lesson to the Bhat woman, *says Joti.*

(8)

The wives of the Kshatriyas (the farmers) enter their farms and remove the weeds and rank grass with their sickles. They take out the weeds and feed them as fodder to the bullocks. They tie the remaining rank grass in a bundle, and carry it on their heads to the (grass)-market. They purchase the pressed oil-cakes (cakes prepared after crushing the oil seeds) to be used as fodder for the bullocks. The (idle) Brahmin calls the hardworking, tired peasant-woman by the disparaging name of a 'peasant woman', *says Joti.*

(9)

She helps her husband to cut the ripe ears of corn and to take them to the circular harvesting spot (frame) dug into the earth. She sweeps it and covers it with a thin coating of cow-dung promptly. She keeps the baskets of corn and chaff trodden by the bullocks from the ears of corn, on a three-legged tall stool, to be winnowed in the wind, and (while they are being winnowed by her husband) she deftly shifts the chaff from the grains of corn with a rough broom energetically. She carefully collects the left-overs (of the corn) from the chaff, to be pounded into the mortar or ground by the grinding stones at home for the morning porridge (for the family). The drone (shirker) of a Brahmin calls the hard working one by the disparaging name of a 'peasant-woman' *says Joti.*

(10)

The Bhat woman does not feed the crops in the fields with the human excreta (night-soil) as (golden) manure, but flaunts a golden ring and a serpent-like (coiled) golden ornament in her coiffure. She does not follow the cattle, collecting the cow-dung, nor does she turn the cow-dung into dung-cakes (pats) because of her over-weening pride. She does not grind the corn in the Shudra's house, nor does she sprinkle water in the courtyard of the Shudra, to earn her livelihood. She thinks it below her dignity to sweep the shudra's courtyard, not does the cover the floor of the Shudra's house with a coating of cow-dung, *says Joti.*

(11)

The Bhat woman does not apply scents and scented pastes (and oils) to the person of the shudra female nor does she massage her body and bath her (with hot water). She does not comb the Shudra female's hair, nor does she dry her body (after bath) nor does she wash her sari and her blouses. She does not clean the plate from which the Shudra female has eaten (her meals), nor does she tend her shoes in her house. The Bhat female does not condescend to look after the Shudra's children, nor does she caress them, *says Joti.*

(12)

The Bhat woman does not work as (a daily-wage) labourer on the Shudra's farm, and hence does not cut the standing crop (ears of corn) on their farms. She does not carry the sheaves of corn to the (circular) threshing floor, nor does she cut the ears of corn with them. She does not hand over the baskets (containing corn and chaff) to be winnowed (in the wind) to the farmers, nor does she sift the partially trodden ears of corn (by the ·bullocks) with a rough broom. She refuses to work as a (daily-wage) labourer at the (circular) threshing floor in the Shudras' farms, nor does she give up assuming airs (or flaunting and finicking), *says Joti*.

(13)

The Bhat woman does not follow the plough on the farm, removing the weeds and rank grass (thrown up by the plough) in the wake of the plough (and the oxen). She does not break the clods of earth nor does she carry baskets of manure on her head. She does not cut the grass and other weeds (with a sickle) in the crop nor does she feed the bullocks with the green fodder, nor does she carry the bundles of grass to sell them in the (grass) market. The Bhat woman despises to work as a labourer on the Shudra's farm, and indulges in idle tricks and finery, *says Joti.*

Opinion from Joteerao Govindrao Phule, on Note No. I, by Mr. B. M. Malabari on Infant Marriage in India.

I concur with Mr. B. M. Malabari's laudable undertaking, and hope that something may be done by our enlightened Government to alleviate the miserable state of the deluded people of this country. Although Mr. M. B. Malabari is not pressed under the immediate burden of our customs and manners, invented by Aryan Shastra makers, he treated the subject so remarkably well that the Shudrathi-Shudras and Brahmin widows will thank him in future undoubtedly. I also now beg to add a few remarks on the middle and lower orders, the downtrodden aborigines of this country. In the course of marriage, if any slight dispute takes place between the parties, the poor girl has to suffer all her life-time. After the marriage is over, should a defect in her family happen to come to the notice of the boy's father, the innocent girl is considered an outcaste. If the boy is younger than the girl, she is not well fed, clothed and cared for properly, nay, she is not allowed to remain with her rich parents. If her father-in-law be ignorant and poor, the girl, not being fed well, is stunted in her growth. In short she is more heavily loaded with work for days and nights than American slaves. Thus she is so unbearably tyrannized that she is obliged to put an end to her life by committing suicide; and the crime is very often hushed up by bribing the villlage Patel, Coolkerni (the quarrel monger) and Policemen. Many poor parents on the bride-groom's side are thus, by incurring debts for marriages, ruined on account of the premature deaths of their daughters-in-law. Besides the husband boy, on coming to his proper senses, does not like his wife and marries one of his own liking. Being thus accustomed, he is induced to marry two, three, or four wives at a time in succession, and thus renders his whole family discontented, abusive and quarrel-some. These ignorant wives are not only obliged to poison each other, but sometimes their own husband. Now the enlightened Hindu of Bengal has made excellent suggestions to University graduates, and these, as they suppose would be a fair beginning for the educated class, but, I think, their suggestions are not *universal and applicable to all the classes of Shudras and Ati-Shudras*, because very few of the former attend the University and the latter are not at all admitted even into vernacular schools and allowed to sit and learn with the higher class boys. In conclusion, unless our wise Government use some compulsory measures, the ignorant, middle and lower classes will not come to their proper sense, because the so-called higher classes of Hindus, who hold responsible posts under Government, have by their cunning and shrewd ways, purposely misguided them in matters of *religion and politics*. I, therefore, suggest that Government should rule that boys under nineteen years of age, and girls under eleven, should not be allowed to marry. In case they do, some reasonable tax may be levied on the parents of the parties married and the money thus obtained should be used in the education of the middle and lower classes of Hindus. But the education should not be transmitted through the medium of *Brahmin teachers*, for while educating, they create in the minds of the pupils wrong religious ideas and lead them astray (Even the subsidiary kings, Sindia, Holkar, and others are, we find, cheated in the open daylight under the pretence of invented religion, and are induced to extract tax indiscriminately from the cultivators without giving them timely allowances. But there is strong hope that His Highness the present Ruler of Baroda will try his utmost to educate and better the condition of the ignorant cultivators as His Highness has received a good and sound English education.

Opinion from Jotteerao Govindrao Phule, on Note No. II, by Mr B. M. Malabari on Enforced Widowhood.

Now I touch upon the most delicate subject of enforced widowhood upon Brahmin women. The partial Aryan Institution inconsiderately allows polygamy to males, which causes them to fall into new habits of wickedness. When his lust is satisfied with his legal wives, he for novelty's sake haunts the houses of public women. He then contracts venereal diseases from them and is obliged to seek medical assistance at an exorbitant cost, for himself and his wives. When medical treatment ceases to cure him and his wives, he loses all hopes of getting children. In this deplorable condition of his life if the lewd husband finds his own wife to go out during night he suspects her of leading a vicious course and so, punishing her severely, turns her out. In old age in order to obliterate the stigma upon his character, the shameless fellow becomes a religious man and hires public harlots to dance and sing in the temples with a view to venerating the stone idols, for his own satisfaction. After the death of this wicked man, his young and beautiful wife is not allowed by the same Aryan Institution to remarry. She is stripped of her ornaments; she is forcibly shaved by her near relatives; she is not well fed; she is not properly clothed; she is not allowed to join pleasure parties, marriages or religious ceremonies. In fact she is bereaved of all the worldly enjoyments, nay, she is considered lower than a culprit or a mean beast.

Moreover, the Aryan Institution enjoins Brahmin males to marry even the lower class girls during the life-time of his first wife; but his real own sister is prohibited to remarry, after the demise of her first husband. Such partial and unjust prohibitions necessarily lead the helpless Aryan widow to commit horrible and heart-rending acts of atrocity. To prove the above assertion I insert the following instance. (One of my Brahmin friends named Rao Saheb Sudashive Bullal Gowndey, who was an officer in the Inam Commission, employed in his house a Brahmin widow as cook, whose name was Kashibai. The poor Kashibai was a well-behaved and beautiful young woman. of a respectable family. She was a chaste woman. She served several months in his house. But in his neighbourhood there lived a shrewd and cunning Shashtriboova of a Brahmin caste, who tried his utmost to mislead this ignorant woman. Kashibai at first resisted his inducement but at last she fell victim to his desire and immediately became pregnant. Af!erwards by the persuasion of her paramour, she tried seyeral poisonous drugs to commit abortion, but all her atternpts failed. After nine months were completed, Kashibai gave birth to a beautiful son and for the sake of her disgrace she murdered the innocent infant with a knife and the corpse was thrown into the well behind the house of her master. Two days after she was arrested by the police on suspicion, tried before the Session Court in Poona and was sentenced to transportation for life. This crime Kashibai committed, that her character may not be spoilt among the Brahmin community. Her case brought to the notice of the public the unjust and partial character of the Aryan Institution, and so the people were struck with horror. Although my means were not sufficient to defray my expense, yet I was compelled to establish a foundling house, in my own compound in Poona, for the Brahmin community immediately after Kashibai's trial was over. The enclosed copy of printed notices was then pasted on the walls of the corners of streets, where the Brahmins reside. From its commencement up to the present time, thirty-five pregnant widows came to his house and were delivered of children, of whom five are living and thirty died by the injuries done to them while in the womb by the poisonous drugs which the mothers must have taken with a view to concealing their pregnancy. Many of the beautiful and helpless ignorant young widows of the respectable Brahmin families have turned out private and public prostitutes on account of this wretched system. How abominable and degrading is the system of Aryan Institution, which compels Brahmin widows to drag their lives in so miserable and shameless ways, that even modesty shrinks back to enter into particular details! In conclusion, I most respectfully crave the favour of your enlightened English Government to remove the tyranny of enforced widowhood, exercised upon the helpless women, by the relentless system of Aryan religious institution. I, therefore, propose that no barbers should be allowed to shave the unfortunate Brahmin widows. It is quite evident from the partial Aryan religious institution that, when it prohibits the widows from remarrying, why the widowers should be allowed to remarry? If the favour be shown to the latter then the poor widows must of necessity be permitted to remarry. There is no doubt that the selfish and wicked law-givers must have added such unjust and nonsensical clauses into their Shastras with malice towards the female

sex.

Memorial Addressed To The Education Commission

A Statement for the information of the Education commission

My experience in educational matters is principally confined to Poona and the surrounding villages. About 25 years ago, the missionaries had established a female school at Poona but no indigeneous school for girls existed at the time. I, therefore, was induced around the year 1854[3] to establish such a school on which me and my wife worked together for many years. After some time, I placed this school under the management of a committee of educated natives. Under their auspices, two more schools were opened in different parts of the town. A year after the institution of the female schools, I also established an indigeneous mixed school for the lower classes, especially the Mahars and Mangs. Two more schools for these classes were subsequently added. Sir Erskine Perry, the president of the late Educational Board, and Mr. Lumsdain, the then Secretary to Government, visited the female schools and were much pleased with the movement set on foot and presented me with a pair of shawls. I continued to work on them for nearly 9 to 10 years, but owing to circumstances, which it is needless here to detail, I seceded from the work. These female schools still exist, having been taken over by the committee of the Educational Department under the management of Mrs. Mitchell. A school for the lower classes, Mahars and Mangs, also exists at the present day, but not in a satisfactory condition. I have also been a teacher for some years in a mission female boarding school. My principal experience was gained in connection with these schools. I devoted some attention also to the primary education available in this Presidency and have had some opportunities in forming an opinion on the system and personnel employed in the lower schools of the Educational Department. I wrote a Marathi pamphlet some years ago exposing the religious practices of the Brahmins and incidentally, among other matters, adverted therein to the present system of education, which by providing ample funds for higher education tended to educate Brahmins and the higher classes only, and to leave the masses wallowing in ignorance and poverty. I summarised the views expressed in the book in an English Preface attached thereto, portions of which I reproduce here as they relate to the present enquiry;

"Perhaps, a percent of the blame in bringing matters to this crisis may be justly laid to the credit of the Government. Whatever may have been their motives in providing more funds and greater facilities for higher education and neglecting that of the masses, it is acknowledged by all that this is not just for the latter. It is an admitted fact that the greater portion of the revenues of the Indian Empire are derived from the ryot's labour — from the sweat of his brow. The higher and richer classes contribute little or nothing to the state exchequer. A well-informed English writer states that ‘our income is derived, not from surplus profits, but from capital not from luxuries, but from the poorest necessaries. It is the product of sin and tears.’"

“That Government should profusely expend a large portion of revenue thus raised on the education of the higher classes, for it is these only who take advantage of it, is anything but just or equitable. Their object in patronising this virtual high class education appears to be to prepare scholars who, it is thought, would in time vend learning without money and without price. If we can inspire, say they, the love of knowledge in the minds of the superior classes, the result will be a higher standard of morals in the case of those individuals, a large amount of affection for the British Government, and unconquerable desire to spread among their own countrymen the intellectual blessings which they have received.

“Regarding these objects of Government the writer above alluded to, states that we have never heard of philosophy more benevolent and more Utopian. It is proposed by men who witness the wondrous changes brought about in the Western world, purely by the agency of popular knowledge, to redress the defects of the two-hundred millions of India, by giving superior education to the superior classes and to them only. We ask the friends of Indian Universities to favour us with a single example of the truth of their theory from the instances which have already fallen within the scope of their experience. They have educated many children of wealthy men and have been the means of advancing very materially the worldly prospects of some of their pupils. But what contribution have these made to the great work of regenerating their fellowmen? How have they begun to act upon the masses? Have any of them formed classes at their own homes or elsewhere, for the instruction of their less fortunate or less wise countrymen? Or have they kept

their knowledge to themselves, as a personal gift, not to be soiled by contact with the ignorant vulgar? Have they in any way shown themselves anxious to advance the general interests and repay the philanthropy with patriotism? — upon what grounds is it asserted that the best way to advance the moral and intellectual welfare of the people is to raise the standard of instruction along the higher classes? This is a glorious argument for aristocracy, were it only tenable. To show the growth of the national happiness, it would only be necessary to refer to the number of pupils at the colleges and the lists of academic degrees. Each Wrangler would be accounted a national benefactor; and the existence of Deans and Proctors would be associated, like the game laws and the ten-pound franchise, with the best interests of the constitution.

“One of the most glaring tendencies of Government system of high class education has been the virtual monopoly by Brahmins over all the higher offices under them. If the welfare of the Ryot is at heart, if it is the duty of Government to check a host of abuses, it behoves them to narrow this monopoly day by day so as to allow a sprinkling of the other castes to get into the public services. Perhaps, some might be inclined to say that it is not feasible in the present state of education. Our only reply is that if Government look a little less after higher education which is able to take care of itself and more towards the education of the masses there would be no difficulty in training up a body men every way qualified and perhaps far better in morals and manners.

“My object in writing the present volume is not only to tell my Shudra brethren how they have been duped by the Brahmins, but also to open the eyes of Government to that pernicious system of high class education, which has hitherto been so persistently followed, and which statesmen like Sir George Campbell, the present Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, with broad universal sympathies, are finding to be highly mischievous and pernicious to the interests of Government. I sincerely hope that the Government will ere long see the error of their ways, trust less to writers or men who look through high class spectacles, and take the glory into their own hands of emancipating my Shudra brethren from the trammels of bondage which the Brahmins have woven around them like the coils of a serpent. It is no less the duty of each of my Shudra brethren who have received any education, to place before Government the true state of their fellowmen and endeavour to the best of their power to emancipate themselves from Brahmin thraldom. Let there be schools for the Shudras in every village; but away with all Brahmin school-masters! The Shudras are the life and sinews of the country, and it is to them alone, and not to the Brahmins, that Government must ever look to tide over their difficulties, financial as well as political. If the hearts and minds of the Shudras are made happy and contented, the British Government need have no fear for their loyalty in the future."

PRIMARY EDUCATION

There is no doubt that the primary education among the masses in this Presidency has been much neglected. Although the number of primary schools now is greater than those existing a few years ago, yet they are not commensurate to the requirements of the community. Government collects a specialness for educational purposes, and it is to be regretted that this fund is not spent for the purposes for which it is collected. Nearly nine-tenths of the villages in this Presidency, or nearly 10 lakhs of children, it is said, are without any kind of provision for primary instruction. A good deal of their poverty, their want of self-reliance, their entire dependence upon the learned and intelligent classes, is attributable to this deplorable state of education among the peasantry. Even in towns the Brahmins, the Purbhoos, the hereditary classes, who generally live by the occupation of pen and the trading classes, seek primary instruction. The cultivating and the other classes, as a rule, do not generally avail themselves of the same. A few of the latter classes are found in primary and secondary schools, but owing to their poverty and other causes they do not continue long at school. As there are no special inducements for them to continue school, they naturally leave off as soon as they find any menial or other occupations. In villages too, most of the cultivating classes hold aloof, owing to extreme poverty, and also because they require their children to tend cattle and look after their fields. Besides an increase in the number of schools, special inducements in the shape of scholarships and half-yearly or annual prizes to encourage them to send their children to school and thus create in them a taste for learning is most essential. I think primary education of the masses should be made compulsory up to a certain age, say at least 12 years. Muhammadans also hold aloof from these schools, as they somehow evince no liking for Marathi or English. There are a few Muhammadan primary schools where their own language is taught. The Mahars, Mangs, and other lower classes are practically excluded from all schools owing to caste prejudices as they are not allowed to sit by the children of the higher castes. Consequently, special schools for these have been opened by Government. But these exist only in larger towns. In the whole of Poona and for a population exceeding over 5,000 people, there is only one school in which the attendance is under 30 boys. This state of matters is not at all creditable to the educational authorities. Under the promise of the Queen's Proclamation, I beg to urge that Mahars, Mangs, and other lower classes, where their number is large enough, should have separate schools for them, as they are not allowed to attend the other schools owing to caste prejudices. In the present state of education, payment by results is not at all suitable for the promotion of education amongst a poor and ignorant people, as no taste has yet been created among them for education. I do not think any teacher would undertake to open schools on his own account among these people, as he would not be able to make a living from it. Government schools and special inducements, as noted above, are essential until such a taste is created among them. With regard to the few Government primary schools that exist in the Presidency, I have observed that the primary education imparted in them is not at all satisfactory or sound. The system is imperfect in so far as it does not prove practical and useful in the future career of the pupils. The system is capable of being developed for the requirements of the community, if improvements that will result in its future usefulness be effected in it. Both the teaching machinery employed and the course in instruction now followed, require a thorough remodelling.

(a) The teachers now employed in the primary schools are almost all Brahmins; a few of them are from the normal training college, the rest are all untrained men. Their salaries are very low, seldom exceeding Rs. 10, and their attainments also very meagre. But as a rule they are all impractical men, and the boys who learn under them generally imbibe inactive habits and try to obtain service, to the avoidance of their hereditary or other hardy or independent professions. I think teachers from primary schools should be trained, as far as possible, out of the cultivating classes, who will be able to mix freely with them and understand their wants and wishes much better than a Brahmin teacher, who generally holds himself aloof under religious prejudices. These would, moreover, exercise a more beneficial influence over the masses than teachers of other classes, and who will not feel ashamed to hold the handle of the plough or the carpenter's adze when required, and who will be able to mix themselves readily with the lower orders of society. The course of training for them ought to include, besides the ordinary subjects, an elementary knowledge of agriculture and sanitation. The untrained teachers should, except when thoroughly efficient, be replaced by efficient trained teachers. To secure a better class of teachers and to

improve their position, better salaries should be given. Their salaries should not be less than Rs 12 and in larger villages should be at least Rs.15 or 20. Associating them in the village polity as auditors of village accounts or registrars of deeds, or village postmasters or stamp vendors, would improve their status and thus exert a beneficial influence over the people among whom they live. The schoolmasters of village schools who pass a large number of boys should also get some special allowance other than their pay as an encouragement to them.

(b) The course of instruction should consist of reading, writing Modi and Balbodh and accounts, and a rudimentary knowledge of general history, general geography and grammar, also an elementary knowledge of agriculture and a few lessons on moral duties and sanitation. The studies in the village schools might be lesser than those in larger villages and towns, but not less practical. In connection with lessons in agriculture, a small model farm, where practical instruction to the pupils can be given, would be a decided advantage and, if really efficiently managed, would be productive of the greatest good to the country. The text-books in use, both in the primary and Anglovernacular schools, require revision and reecasting as much as they are not practical or progressive in their scope. Lessons on technical education and morality, sanitation and agriculture, and some useful arts, should be interspersed among them in progressive series. The fees in the primary schools should be As 1 to 2 from the children of cess-payers and non-cess-payers.

(c) The supervising agency over these primary schools is also very defective and insufficient. The Deputy Inspector's visit once a year can hardly be of any appreciable benefit. All these schools ought to at least be inspected quarterly if not more often. I would also suggest the advisability of visiting these schools at other times and without any intimation being given. No reliance can be placed on the district or village officers owing to the multifarious duties devolving on them, as they seldom find time to visit them, and when they do, their examination is necessarily very superficial and imperfect. European Inspector's supervision is also occasionally very desirable, as it will tend to exercise a very efficient control over the teachers generally.

(d) The number of primary schools should be increased —

(1) By utilising the indigenous schools as they should be and should be conducted by trained and certificated teachers, by giving them liberal grants-in-aid.

(2) By making over one half of the local cess fund for primary education alone.

(3) By compelling, under a statutory enactment, municipalities to maintain all the primary schools within their respective limits.

(4) By an adequate grant from the provincial or imperial funds.

Prizes and scholarships to pupils, and capitation or other allowance to the teachers, as an encouragement will render these schools more efficient. The Municipalities in large towns should be asked to contribute whole share of the expenses incurred on primary schools within the municipal areas. But in no case should the management of the same to be entirely made over to them. They should be under the supervision of the Educational Department. The municipalities should also give grant-in-aid to such secondary and private English schools as shall be conducted according to the rules of the Educational Department, where their funds permit, such grants-in-aid being regulated by the number of boys passed every year. These contributions from Municipal funds may be made compulsory by statutory enactment. The administration of the funds for primary education should ordinarily be in the hands of the Director of Public Instruction. But if educated and intelligent men are appointed on the local or district committees, these funds may be safely entrusted to them, under the guidance of the Collector, or the Director of Public Instruction. At present, the local boards consist of ignorant and uneducated men, such as Patels, Inamdars, Surdars, etc. who would not be capable of exercising any intelligent control over the funds.

INDIGENOUS SCHOOLS

Indigenous schools exist a good deal in cities, towns, and some large villages, especially where there is a Brahmin population. From the latest reports of Public Instruction in this Presidency, it is found that there are 1,049 indigenous schools with about 27,694 pupils in them. They are based on the old village system. The boys are generally taught the multiplication tables by heart, a little Modi writing and reading, and made to recite a few religious pieces. The teachers, as a rule, are not capable of affecting any improvements, as they are not initiated in the art of teaching. The fees charged in these schools range from 2 to 8 annas. The teachers generally come from the dregs of Brahminical society. Their qualifications hardly go beyond reading and writing Marathi very indifferently and casting accounts up to the rule of three or so. They set up as teachers as the last resource of getting a livelihood. Their failure or unfitness in other callings of life obliges them to open schools. No arrangements exist in the country to train teachers for indigenous schools. The indigenous schools could not be given any good account, unless the present teachers are replaced by men from the training colleges and by those who pass the 6th standard in the vernaculars. The present teachers will willingly accept State aid, but money thus spent will be thrown away. I do not know any instance in which a grant-in-aid is paid to such a school. If it is being paid anywhere, it must be in very rare cases. In my opinion, grant-in-aid should be paid to such schools unless the master is a certificated one. But if certificated or competent teachers be found, grant-in-aid should be given and will be productive of great good.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The cry in the whole country for some time has been that Government have amply provided for higher education, whereas that of the masses has been neglected. To some extent this cry is justified, although the classes directly benefited by the higher education may not readily admit it. But for all this no well-wisher of his country would desire that Government should, at the present time, withdraw its aid from higher education. All that they would wish is, that as one class of the body politic has been neglected, its advancement should form as much of a concern as the other. Education in India is still in its infancy. Any withdrawal of State aid from higher education will be injurious to the spread of education generally. A taste for education among higher and wealthy classes such as the Brahmins and Purbhoos, especially those classes who live by the pen, has been created, and a gradual withdrawal of State aid may be possible as far as these classes are concerned; but in the middle and lower classes, among whom higher education has made no perceptible progress, such a withdrawal would be a great hardship. In the event of such withdrawal, boys will be obliged to have recourse to inefficient and sectarian schools, much against their wishes, and the cause of education cannot but suffer. Nor could any part of such education be entrusted to private agency. For a long time to come, the entire educational machinery, both ministerial and executive, must be in the hands of Government. Both the higher and primary education require all the fostering care and attention which Government can bestow on it. The withdrawal of Government from schools or colleges would not only check the spread of education, but would seriously endanger that spirit of neutrality which has all along been the aim of Government to foster, owing to the different nationalities and religious creeds prevalent in India. This withdrawal may, to a certain extent, create a spirit of self-reliance for local purposes in the higher and wealthy classes, but the cause of education would be so far injured that the spirit of self-reliance would take years to remedy that evil. Educated men of ability, who do not succeed in getting into public service, may be induced to open schools for higher education on being assured of liberal grant-in-aid. But no one would be ready to do so off his own account as a means of gaining a livelihood, and it is doubtful whether such private efforts could be permanent or stable, nor would they succeed half so well in their results. Private schools, such as those of Mr. Vishnu Shastree Chiploonkar and Mr. Bhavey, exist in Poona, and with adequate grant-in-aid may be rendered very efficient, but they can never supersede the necessity of the high school. The missionary schools, although some are very efficiently conducted, do not succeed half so well in their results, nor do they attract half the number of students which the high school attracts. The superiority of Government schools is mainly owing to the richly paid staff of teachers and professors, which it is not possible for a private school to maintain. The character of instruction given in the Government higher schools is not at all practical, or such as is required for the necessities of ordinary life. It is only good to turn out so many clerks and schoolmasters. The Matriculation examination unduly engrosses the attention of the teachers and pupils, and the course of studies prescribed has no practical element in it, so as to fit the pupil for his future career in independent life. Although the number of students presenting for the Entrance examination is not at all large if the diffusion of knowledge in the country is taken into consideration, it looks large when the requirements of Government service are concerned. Were the education universal and within easy reach of all, the number would have been larger still, and it should be so, and I hope it will be so hereafter. The higher education should be so arranged as to be within easy reach of all, and the books on the subjects for the Matriculation examination should be published in the Government Gazette, as is done in Madras and Bengal. Such a course will encourage private studies and secure larger diffusion of knowledge in the country. It is a boon to the people that the Bombay University recognises private studies in the case of those presenting for the Entrance examination. I hope, the University authorities will be pleased to extend the same boon to higher examinations. If private studies were recognised by the University in granting the degrees of B.A., M.A. &c., many young men will devote their time to private studies. Their doing so will instill further tend to the diffusion of knowledge. It is found in many instances quite impossible to prosecute studies at the colleges for various reasons. If private studies be recognised by the University, much good will be affected to the country at large, and a good deal of the drain on the public purse on account of higher education will be lessened. The system of Government scholarships, at present followed in the Government schools, is also defective, as much as it gives undue encouragement to those classes only, who have already acquired a taste for education to the

detriment of the other classes. The system might be arranged so that some of these scholarships should be awarded to certain classes amongst whom education has made no progress. The system of awarding them by competition, although abstractedly equitable, does not tend to the spread of education among other classes regard to the question as to educated natives finding remunerative employment, it will be remembered that the educated natives who mostly belong to the Brahmanical and other higher classes are mostly fond of service. But as the public service can afford no field for all the educated natives who come out from schools and colleges, and moreover the course of training they receive is not of a technical or practical nature, they find great difficulty in betaking themselves to other manual or remunerative employments. Hence the cry that the market is overstocked with educated natives who do not find any remunerative employment. It may, to a certain extent, be true that some of the professions are overstocked, but this does not show that there is no other remunerative employment to which they can betake themselves. The present number of educated men is very small in relation to the country at large, and we trust that the day may not be far distant when we shall have the present number multiplied a hundredfold and all be taking themselves to useful and remunerative occupations and not be looking after service. In conclusion, I beg to request the Education Commission to be kind enough to sanction measures for the spread of female primary education on a more liberal scale.

JOTEERAO GOVINDRAO PHOOLEY,
Merchant and Cultivator and
Municipal Commissioner,
Peth Joona Ganja.

Poona, 19th October 1882.

[Education Commission, Bombay, Vol. II.. Calcutta, 1884, pp. 140-154]

POEMS

Our Brahmin-ridden Policy-Educational System

(Communicated) A Ballad.

The real owners (of the produce) have to suffer, and the Pathans (extortionist money-lenders) have a field-day. Children of undeserving parents are being educated at the cost of Shudras. The Malis (gardeners) and the Kunbis (the farmers) toil and moil in the fields only to enrich (the Government) by paying the contributions and taxes and (as a result) but remain half-naked (impoverished). Little children have to tend the cattle (on the barren heaths) and the soles of their bare feet are scorched (in the heat). Their parents pine inwardly as their children cannot take education, and they blame their ill-luck. (The Education Department) Beggars (robs) the ryots (landless-workers) by giving them false promises to educate (their children), and sends (appoints) only Brahmin teachers to man these Schools. They collect a few pupils with the help of the Kulkarni (the ancestral village accounts-clerk) and enter (a large) figure in their reports. They (the Brahmin teachers) regard teaching the children of the Mahars (Ati-Shudras, untouchables) as polluting (them), while they shake hands with the Englishmen (with great alacrity). The Brahmin teachers are not ashamed to treat these children as untouchables.

Once upon a time, they (the untouchables) were your great enemies, but now you have turned them into your vassals (subordinates, slaves)! Even the Americans (slave-owners) were put to shame (defeated) even though they did not regard themselves as earth-gods (which the Brahmins did here).

The Brahmin teachers glorify god Brahma in the course of their teaching, and at the same time, they criticise and condemn other religions. This is the usual method of their teaching. They teach (the tenets of) a false religion (heresies) skilfully (conniving) to the Shudra children and indoctrinate their (innocent) minds with hatred for the Queen (Empress). Such crafty people are appointed as teachers (by the English Government) and children of undeserving parents are being educated at the cost of the Shudras.

If the Brahmin children commit mistakes, the (Brahmin) teachers take special pains to teach them (again), and give nominal punishment to them. But if the Shudra children commit mistakes, the (Brahmin) teachers slap them and box their ears mercilessly. As a result, out of sheer fear of corporal punishment, the Shudra children run away from the schools. But teachers (shrewdly) take care to maintain the requisite number (of pupils) the rolls. When the Educational Inspector visits the school, the (Brahmin) teacher curries favour with him and behaves in a most obsequious (sycophantic) manner towards him. As the Educational Inspector is a Brahmin, the school teacher himself marks the attendance of the pupils. The Inspector gives the teacher an excellent grade and praise him to the skies in his inspection report. I describe only the gist briefly here.

“The Shudras are very ignorant and foolish, and their children are not interested in taking education at all." Thus runs the report of the Inspector, a blatant lie. The Brahmins indulge in mutual admiration, and promote the interests of their own caste-men sedulously. It is a thousand pities that no one brings these guilty persons to book. In this scandalous manner the poor, ignorant Shudras are systematically fleeced, and children of undeserving parents are being educated (at the cost of the Shudras). The (Brahmin) teachers spend most of their time in religious observances and rites, and tiny tots mark the pupils' attendance on the roll. They while away the time by pretending to teach trash to the Shudra children. This is how they discharge their duty as teachers. They come late to the school at eight a.m. and occupy the chairs (in the class-rooms). They teach the Brahmin pupils till ten o'clock, and gauge the time by sun-dial. Being (thoroughly exhausted by their strenuous exercise), they wipe away beads of perspiration from their brows, pat their forehead gently, lean (recline) their (tired) heads gently on the table. They indulge in such antics in front of the pupils. They start out of their blissful slumbers at lunch-time, and leave promptly for their homes.

They enjoy the post-prandial siesta· Siesta over, they either browse through the newspapers or write personal letters. In the cool afternoon, they attend the school for a brief while, and engage the class at their sweet will and pleasure.

These Brahmin teachers make a total mess or mockery of teaching the Shudra pupil. I speak this out of personal experience.

They read their spurious religious tracts (scriptures) before the gardeners and peasants at night, to improve their minds but they succeed in impressing upon their (innocent) minds their (Brahmins) own greatness (importance). They indulge in teaching them wrong things, and promptly receive from the ignorant folk wheat-flour and monetary gifts. The undeserving children take education (in their schools). Their diplomacy is a model (of perfect fraud) to alI the world, and they exploit the Shudras un-ashamedly. The Shudra farmers pay the local fund (cess) to the government for their children' education, but the Brahmin teachers fill up their own coffers and destroy the illusion of the common people in the world. The Ati-Shudras revere the Brahmins as Kings and earth-gods. You can imagine the plight, then, of the helots and thralls. Our English Government calls itself as enlightened and wise, but (how strange it is that) it hastens to appoint such hypocrites as teachers (in the schools). Is it ever possible for the tigers to provide flocks of sheep to the shepherds? Is it ever possible for the birds to fly in water? (No, never!)

Being repentant (or emancipated) by knowledge, the (so called) enlightened frogs presume to teach the serpents. They (Brahmin teachers) pretend to be enlightened or emancipated to curry favour with the English rulers but continue to worship stone-images (of gods) in their worship-rooms at home.

(I exhort the English Government) to appoint teachers from other (non-Brahmin) communities, who would be models of wholesome (righteous) knowledge (enlightenment) in schools to teach the Shudra children. They should preferably be selected from among the gardeners or peasants or the Ati-Shudras (such as Mangs and Mahars). Take this as the seed (quint-essence) of my experience. The tree (of knowledge) will, then, yield a rich harvest (of plentiful fruits), the Shudras' lot will be improved considerably, and thus the Brahmins, (the self-styled) earth-gods will be put to shame.

Joti pines in his heart because the Government does not pay any heed to the needs of the Shudra children, while some Christian missionaries exert themselves (to improve the lot of the Shudra children). Oh English rulers, you call yourselves as enlightened, liberal and benevolent (rulers), but (how strange it is that) the undeserving children take education in the schools (financed by the ‘local fund’ paid by the Shudras).

A Poem ('Akhand ') on Truth

Truth is the original home of us all. It is the foundation or corner-stone of all religions. All happiness in this world is the off-spring of (result of) the Eternal Truth. Truth is the foundation of all (human) happiness. All else is sheer darkness. Truth is very mighty as it destroys all sham, deceit or untruth. That which is rooted in truth easily exposes or destroys hypocrites or selfish persons. Realising the might of Truth, the impostors (pretender) is mortified or anguished in his heart. An actor or pretender will never be happy as he tries (in vain) to supplant (oust) the God of Truth. Joti prays (humbly) to all persons not to give quarter to (shelter) deceit or hypocrisy in vain.

Advice to the Shudras and Ati-Shudras ('Akhand')

A careful research into the Vedas will convince us that there were no discriminations and distinctions of high and low in the Iran (Persia) of the Aryans. The aborigines like the Gonds and the Bhils were the original masters (rulers) of that land (India), and the Iranians (Aryans) came to India at a later date (as invaders and interlopers). The Aryan brahmins created a great confusion (upheaval, turmoil) in India, and (the original inhabitants of India) who were intensely patriotic, defended themselves (and their homeland) valiantly. The Aryan invaders (Brahmins) desecrated the sacred sacrifices here, robbed and oppressed the original inhabitants and stigmatised them as 'Dasyus'. The Aryan Brahmins termed the natives as 'wicked' and vicious clearly corrupted forms of 'Dasyus'. This corrupted form gained currency in their language. The word 'Dasyu' was later corrupted into 'Dost' or 'Dushman' by the Mohammedans in their own language (Arabic, Persian, or Urdu?). This is my inference. The Aryan Brahmins established their own supremacy and domination over the original inhabitants here by conquering them in wars. The war-like Kshatriyas were enslaved and were given the pejorative name of 'kshudra' (insignificant) which later was corrupted to become 'Shudra'. This corrupted form gained currency later on in the Aryan language. (The Aryan god) Parashuram used to hunt down the pregnant (Kshatriya) women and imprisoned them as hostages. When they delivered, Parashuram butchered their new-born babies in cold blood. Beloved of his father, he killed his own mother-Renukadevi (at his father's behest). How can he be (revered as) a god? The Aryan conquerors further humiliated them by giving them contemptuous names out of spite, such as 'demons' 'evil spirits' and 'Maha-aris' i.e. Mahars meaning 'great enemies'. The Aryans gave them food which was only enough for bare sustenance and made them toil hard. They robbed them of the fruits of their labour, treated them worse than cattle, surpassing, in this, even the Americans (in their ill-treatment of their slaves) in the whole world. The Aryans tortured and humiliated the Shudras and Ati-Shudras in numerous ways and heaped ridicule upon them at all times. They never took pity on them (in any way) but continued to oppress them in all possible ways, and worst of all, they *forbade them to take education*. What had happened to their oft-vaunted virtues of compassion and forgiveness? Oh King Manu! Please declare your policy or intention (once for all). The *Sarvajanik Sabha* (the People's organisation founded in Poona on Gudhi Padwa - 1870) is taboo-ridden like a woman having her monthly course (when she is supposed to be 'untouchable') but why is it antagonistic (inimical) to the Mahars (untouchables) in its attitude? The (Indian) National Congress is as helpless as the Indian widows, and is content to dance to the tune of the Bengali leaders (like W.C. Bonnerjee). The Mangs and Mahars (the untouchables in India) are prohibited from learning Sanskrit 'Om namah' (salutation to the Godhead), (So I would like to ask) 'For whom is the (Indian) Civil Service - 'I.C.S' - meant? The Brahmins avoid even the (polluting) shadow cast by the Mangs and Mahars. How can they, then, claim to have fraternal love (for them)? This (so-called) *Sarvajanik Sabha*' (the People's Organisation') presumes to tender advice to the English Government, but all its recondite (esoteric) Brahma-philosophy is absolutely useless. Its office-bearers put on airs like actors and succeed in enlisting the support of simple-minded (un-suspecting) Indian Princes. Presuming to be advocates, they try to act as (the people's) arbiters and at the same time, hoodwink Mr. Lee Warner. Mr. Gopal (Hari) Deshmukh (alias Lokahitawadi) has succinctly exposed the extremely unethical conduct (ways) of the Aryan worthies (the Brahmins). The (Indian) National Congress presumes to tender (un-warranted) advice to the English rulers, but it should try to follow the dictates of the Truth (in its dealings with the masses), if it intends to achieve a (lasting) unity (among the people). The (Indian) Civil Service has been (unjustly) monopolised by the Aryan Brahmins (here), and I beg to submit that it portends a great danger to the whole nation. I exhort my Shudra brethren most humbly (to realise) that these Aryan Brahmins (Officers in the Civil Service) are verily stony-hearted. Lee Warner is an (English) officer of honesty and rare integrity, and is a champion of the Shudras and a (true) friend of the helpless. O learned Shudras! When will you wake up from the slumber of ages and examine closely for yourselves the supreme confusion created here by the Aryan Brahmins? You will dance to the tune of (the wicked Aryans) like demented (ignorant) women, and in the bargain, your children will be completely exploited (beggared). The dead animals are also useful (to man) because our shoes are made from their hides, but when you die, (please remember that) you will only be the laughing stock and a source of botheration to all. (When you die) what account will you render unto the Omnipresent God? Then you will, indeed, be greatly confused (for an answer). "Fie upon him!" - will declare the people in one voice, after

you die, and your women-folk will be ashamed to claim kinship with you in (public company). O Shudras! You are not beasts but are men, the pinnacle of God's creation, dowered with a radiant intellect (by God) which, alas! you have totally misused (widowed).

I really wonder how you (the Peshwas) have come to style yourselves as "Shreemant" and the "King of the ignorant fold" (the 'titles' that the Peshwas had gratuitously conferred on themselves, an insult to the people as such). My only regret is that you did not perish at your birth. Watch very carefully the great pains the English rulers have taken (in their administration here) and respect them thankfully. (O my ignorant people!) I beg of you most humbly not to be (shamelessly) ungrateful like the Peshwas (in Poona). Behave decorously, in consonance with the high privilege of being (rational) human beings, and educate all your children (girls as well as boys) who, hopefully, will become learned. If you study Sanskrit (the language of the gods) sedulously you will surely remember my (timely) advice to you. (The Brahmin scholars) did not allow you even to hear a single word of Sanskrit, and so hid the treasures of the Vedas and other esoteric 'Sanskrit works' from you. You should bring out in the open (thoroughly expose) the deep-laid villainy of the Aryan Brahmins, as this is a golden opportunity for you, so declares Joti.

A Paean (Song of Praise) for Eternal Truth

(A Hallelujah for Eternal Truth)

Victory, eternal Victory, to our Eternal Truth! Let us search for our Creator with the help of your strength (power). When the Aryan Brahmins were victorious they condemned and humiliated the Kshatriyas (the heroic original inhabitants of India). They further reduced them to the plight of non-entities by forbidding them any access to education (learning). The Aryan Brahmins treated the Kshatriyas as worse than beasts and compelled them to worship their feet, while claiming to be earth-gods themselves. Putting on the airs of tyrants and despots, they robbed the ignorant masses. They were never bothered (frightened) by the prickings of their conscience. The Brahmins enjoyed sumptuous feasts, and in this they surpassed (excelled) Brahma the Demon (Brahma-Rakshas). They (gladly) accept alms in the name of the deceased persons (from their relations), and shameless rascals that they are, enjoy those alms to their heart's content. It never occurred to them to allow the toiling Shudra or the blind and the halt or the orphan to enjoy good food. The (powerful) Vedic lore (learning) is totally worsted at the sun-rise of Truth, and its hollowness (untruthful nature) is thoroughly exposed on a close scrutiny. When the (spurious) Scriptures hear (realise) the grandeur and nobility of the Eternal Truth, they are completely mortified as if their faces are plastered with black oily pigments. The heretics are completely worsted when they see your visage, O Truth, and hang down their heads in great shame. When you treat the ignorant Shudras with due compassion and kindness, O Truth! the (so-called) earth-gods (the Brahmins) tremble with trepidation. O Truth! You are verily an ocean of compassion (for us the Shudras) and you have emancipated us from the trammels of Brahmin thraldom. Through your blessed grace, we have understood (realised) the (right) path in life, and have begun to serve (diligently) our parents (or the ignorant Shudras)?

Victory, eternal Victory, to our Eternal Truth!

(2) *Hallelujah for Eternal Truth –*

Let us serve the King of Truth who is an embodiment of pure radiance and great integrity (rectitude). (Saints and seers) search for it in the state of Eternal Bliss (Nirvana). It attracts our minds to the first Cause (of Creation). This (Truth) has disappeared in the world. Nobody knows which is the *Summum bonum* (of life). The Aryan Brahmins have invented many (fictitious, spurious) religions, the better to serve their own interests. While searching for the Truth, I came to realise the final (essential) secret. I am fed up with the spurious religion, and hence have abjured mean (false) practices. I exhort all Shudras to remember God (gracefully) to embrace the doctrine of Truth, to abjure the spurious religious practices and to treat all human beings with fraternal love. Do not spurn the poor and helpless persons by assuming overweening pride, and do not assume airs by being taboo-ridden. Overcome all evil and serve (follow) King Bali (serve the tiller of the soil who is the authentic King). Maintain the members of your family by dint of (your) hard labour. *Always speak the Truth.* Abjure wicked religious dogma, and put the earth-gods (the Brahmins) to shame by educating the Shudras (and Ati-Shudras). Dedicate the service of the down-trodden to God. Vanquishing all spurious (heretic) religions, *Joti* bows down before God.

The Poems (Akhands) given at the end of the book "The Universal Religion of Truth"

An earnest request (prayer) by the author of this book to all men and women.

The Creator has created this earth (the Universe) which sustains (bears the weight of) us all. It is adorned with different kinds of grass (bushes) and trees. The trees bear many luscious fruits. These fruits and the kindly shade of the trees are meant for our comfort. Night and day the earth moves ceaselessly (on its axis) for our comforts, and (fondly) looks after us all. There should not be different religions for different human beings, as our Creator is one, says Joti.

(2)

The rains and rivers are created (provided) by our Creator for the convenience and comforts of animate and inanimate life (on this earth). The rivers flow rapidly and majestically and supply all beings with plentiful water. The human beings are able to sail in ships on the oceans for trade and commerce and are able to make themselves happy. How is it that there are different religions for different people? Why have you gone mad (lost your reason)? asks Joti.

(3)

The one and only Sun provides light (illumination) fur us all and enables us to engage ourselves in different activities. The Sun endows all animate and inanimate existence with (vibrant) life and also sustains us all. He never discriminates among human beings, and like a kind father, makes us all quite happy and contented. There should be only one religion for all human beings and they should always follow the path of Truth, says Joti.

(4)

The one and only Moon traverses the sky ceaselessly, night and day, and delights the hearts of us all. The ebb and flow of the ocean (its low and high tides) are caused by her. She also governs the waves and the breakers of the saline ocean. The rain clouds convert the same saline water into sweet (potable) water which satisfies and delights all beings (by quenching their thirst). How is it that there are different religions for different people? Why have you gone mad (lost your reason)? asks Joti.

(5)

(The Creator) has created the wind specially and hence all beings can breathe (inhale and exhale) freely. It nourishes and protects all beings as also Nature (plants and trees) in the world. It is the wind which keeps the atmosphere pure and makes all beings happy and contented always (by day and night). Let all human beings follow the Universal Religion of Truth and sing the praises of God, says Joti.

(6)

The Creator has endowed all beings with eyes (eye-sight) with which they are able to see one another. He has also equipped them with the rational faculty with which they can search for the (real) Truth, and lead the ignorant to the (right) path. The Creator has ordained One Universal Religion of Truth (for us all). What is the propriety of the people quarrelling (among themselves) on various counts? Let all human beings conduct themselves in awe and fear of the Creator, and thus lead happy lives, says Joti.

(7)

Let all men and women labour honestly, maintain all the members of their own families honourably and thus live in joy and contentment. You should send all your children (sons and daughters) to school, and feed (helpless) students gratis. You should practise the dictates of the Sovereign Truth in your daily lives, and treat the handicapped persons with consideration and compassion. By such conduct you will not only make others happy and contented, but you will yourselves also be happy and contented, says Joti.

(8)

He who is addicted to vices does not deserve to receive any alms (from others). A liar is (as bad as) but a drunkard, as he cannot control irrational (illogical) behaviour. All human beings are (dear to one another) as brothers and sisters, and you are the greatest among them all. You should use, your intellectual capabilities to make one another (quite) happy and should take care of the helpless, say Joti.

(9)

The Creator of us all is the supreme Master of us all, and all human beings should hold Him in awe. All of us should enjoy (share) the property (good things of life) in an equitable manner, should live in peace and amity, and should never resort to quarrels. Human beings should not observe any distinctions or discriminations on the score of religion or administration (nationality) and should always behave truthfully, as desired by the Creator (as per the dictates of the Creator). I beg of you all to be happy and prosperous. This is my exhortation to all human beings, says Joti.

(10)

The operation (movement) of the Solar System (in space) is so wonderful that it defies human rationality or imagination (it is beyond them). So many other satellites gravitate around the Solar System. (The earth is) peopled by myriads of living organisations (beings). The Creator has created all human beings, and He protects them as His children. 'Do unto others as you would be done by' and set everyone else at peace and harmony, says Joti.

Hypocrisy of the Brahmins

The desires of the hypocritical Brahmins and the cunning exertions of the Bhat (priests) are actuated (by an intention to fleece the Shudras). They (unashamedly) say that God provides (the wherewithal) to them, and hence they presume to instruct the Shudras. They caricature God as a happy-go-lucky person, and deceive the Shudras in His name. Sloth (idleness) is man's enemy and hence men should perform manual labour (for their livelihood). The cunning Brahmin, on the other hand desires to maintain himself by unethical means. He holds his nose with his hand (fingers) and recites the name of God ceaselessly (by himself) and expects the Shudras to toil in the fields and maintain (feed) the Brahmins (with the fruits of their labour). They enjoy sumptuous feasts and rest on soft beds (at night). They occupy many high (Government) posts only to exploit the Shudras (in various ways). The Brahmins wish, in their heart of hearts, that only the Brahmins should be appointed as teachers (in the schools) so that they can criminally neglect their duty (of teaching) the Shudras who will thus remain ignorant. Some shrewd and cunning Brahmin politicians *pretend to serve the cause of India (as Indian patriots), but are secretly nursing an ambition to be elected to the British 139 Parliament, but they expect the Shudras to fight and perish on the battlefield.* The Brahmins-the earth-gods-cherish a keen desire (hankering) to ride in the stately palanquins to be carried on the 'Shudras' shoulders while alive, and they expect the same Shudras to act as the pallbearers (when they die). The Brahmins hanker (intensely to enter the (Indian) Civil Service, but pretend to criticise, the British rulers in public meetings. They hurl vitriolic invectives against the English rulers, in choice English, while pretending to fight for the rights of the Indians. Joti (humbly) exhorts (the Shudras) to give up (exterminate) this Brahmin villainy (plot) root and branch, to earn their livelihood by honest labour and *worship at the shrine of the (Eternal) Truth in all humility.*

THE FLAME DIVINE

Hail Joti - Luther! seeker of the Holy Grail,
Knight-errant redressing ‘Aryan’ wrong,
Champion - doughty of the under-dog,
Banishing Priest, Mammon, blazed glorious trail.

Soul prophetic, gardener grand,
Redeemer, healer of Shudra discord,
Idol-wrecker and ‘tiller’s whip-cord’,
Beacon eternal, ‘cross sea and land.

Foster-father to generations-unborn,
Truth-seeker, magnanimous, free,
The toilers knit in camaraderie
‘Sweetness and light’, a radiant morn.

-P. G. P.

Poems condemning the Practice of Collecting the Local Fund (Cess) from the Shudras (1 to 11)

(1)

The children of the Brahmins succeed in completing their education. They behave in a deferential manner towards the English rulers. They capture the Officers Posts by showering fulsome praise on the whites (the English rulers), and exploit the Shudras in all walks of life. The misguided Brahmin teachers teach wrong principles of logic and religion to the Shudra children, as they (the teachers) hate, (are Jealous of) the English rulers. O Shudras! You should first arouse (the conscience of) the English rulers as they are levying the local fund from you (compulsorily), says Joti.

(2)

The Shudras pay the *local fund* (to the tune of one anna per rupee) along with the land (assessment) (every year) to the Government (for their children's education). But, unfortunately, the cunning Brahmins gobble it all up in the Education Department. Kindly show us how many Shudra children they have taught (in the schools) so far, and how many Shudra officers they have trained so far. The white (English) Officers have solicitude for the Shudras in their hearts, but unfortunately, they appoint the Brahmins to all responsible (important) posts. The generous Shudras are now fed up with paying the *local fund* to the Government and also with maintaining the Brahmin (Officers) (out of the said fund), says Joti.

(3)

(The English officers in the Education Department) should inspect all the primary schools in the villages, for the Brahmins have become overweeningly proud in all walks of life (in India). They should appoint such teachers as are imbued with an unquestioned humanitarian outlook, and they should also totally abjure the Brahmins' invidious practice of discriminating against the Shudras. The type of education that the inveterately orthodox Brahmin teachers dole out to the Shudra children inculcates, on their minds, the quintessence of a false religion. The doctrine of Manu (as enshrined in the 'Manu Smriti') is a veritable concoction of lies (falsehood). How long, O Lord, how long should the generous Shudras continue to pay the *local fund* to the Government only to fatten the Brahmins? asks Joti.

(4)

Let the young Shudra boys take education (by attending the schools) and they should also (be ready to) serve as school teachers in the Education Department. No discrimination should be practised (against any type of students) in the schools. The teachers should teach all children (human beings) with impartiality and uniformity. The Shudras should abjure the fad (the canker) of *caste distinctions* (communalism) totally, and they should further put the Aryan Brahmins to shame by doing meritorious deeds. The *local fund* is contributed by the Shudras by the sweat of their brows to the Government, but the unscrupulous Aryan Brahmins gobble it all up, says Joti.

ABHANG

Oh Queen (Empress Victoria)! Your writ does not run in (our land of) India. (Your Government has gone to sleep in India). Please open your eyes and see (the ravages wrought everywhere by) the Brahmin officers (bureaucracy). The traditional-Brahmin village-accountant (Kulkarni) wields a powerful pen (controls the records). The junior revenue officer (the Mahalkari) is a veritable lord in his sub-division. The Tehsildar awards harsh punishments to the Shudras, and hence appears to be the god of death (Yama) to them. The poor Collector is, indeed, helpless before the devilish machinations of his personal secretary. The Revenue Department is predominantly manned by the Brahmin officers. Every Government Department is monopolised by the Brahmin bureaucrats and hence the poor, ignorant farmer does not get any justice (from them). Joti requests the Queen Empress to come to the rescue of the Shudras (subjects) and emancipate them from the clutches of the wicked (Brahmin bureaucracy in lndia).

Abhangs about The Brahmin Priest-craft

Do not depend upon the Brahmin priests, O, Shudras! For they fleece you under the guise of (false) religion. Select referees (or arbiters) -both young and old- from among your own friends and castemen. Their age, experience, their fraternal feelings for you should be considered carefully by you while appointing them as the referees (marriage priests). The bride and bridegroom should first pray humbly to God and then garland each other. You should then (be able to) rejoice collectively. *There is no necessity or propriety of Brahmin priests (at your weddings) and you should drive them away (from the marriage pandals)* says Joti.

(5)

The Brahmins are generally found working as (primary) school teachers in almost all the village schools, but they inculcate sedition (treason) in the minds of the Shudra children. They compel the Mang and Mahar (untouchable) pupils to sit segregated from the other (high-caste) pupils, and enjoy the benefits of the *local fund* (cess) undeservedly (without putting in any useful work). The Brahmin teachers skilfully hoodwink the white (English) officers (in the Education Department) and persecute the Mahars with the tenets of the concocted (spurious) religion. The untouchables contribute '*the local fund*' to the Government (the '*local fund*' should be expended for the good of the untouchables). Why should the Brahmins then, practise this fraud (on the untouchables)? asks Joti.

(6)

The (heartless) Brahmin teachers persecute the Shudra children attending their schools, and ridicule them openly in the classrooms (in the presence of the other pupils). The casteist (caste-conscious) Brahmins (teachers) openly flaunt and parade their caste-superiority, and (unashamedly) declare their caste ascendancy. The Aryan Brahmins used to devour the flesh of horses and cows (beef) in the ancient sacrifices (that they then performed) whereas they content themselves with slaughtering the goats, in the English regime. They have the temerity to criticise the English rulers in a self-righteous manner (arrogantly), but at the same time sedulously fleece the Shudras, says Joti.

(7)

The Brahmin examiners (or School Inspectors) practise blatant partiality and award more marks to the Brahmin pupils than what they really deserve (in the school examinations). They glower at the Shudra pupils and thus intimidate them in the examination. The Aryan Brahmins who (heartily) hate on others (Shudras and Ati-Shudras) in the world are really vermin (pusillanimous or mean-minded) of the first order, and lose no opportunity to insult and humiliate them at all times (all the while). The guileless, unsuspecting (holy) Englishmen pamper the Brahmins unnecessarily and allow them a free hand (to practise their knavery), says Joti.

(8)

Enlist all the Shudra children in the Govt. schools on a priority basis, and do not give quarter to-the detestable Bhat (Brahmin) at any cost. Oh ye Shudras! You should try to become teachers like the Brahmins, and surpass (excel) them in practising the tenets of Truth. You should impart real knowledge to the Shudra children (in the schools) and, then, indulge in tall talk (empty boast). You should try to exterminate the (hated) doctrine of Manu, root and branch. Instead of doing this (useful service), O Brahmins, you demand the payment of the '*local fund*' (from the Shudras) and, thereby, mortify or put the Shudras to great shame, says Joti.

(9)

Having taken education, you should travel from village to village, advising (enlightening) the Shudras (to take education). Demand of the Government to appoint Shudra teachers (in the Schools) and tell the 'venerable' Aryan Brahmins to go beggjng (from door to door). Send all (your) Shudra boys and girls to school (without fail) so that they will become well trained (competent persons of character) in all walks of life (for a variety of jobs). To what different parties (beneficiaries) should the Shudras pay the *local fund*? And how long should they continue to maintain (feed) the cunning (Brahmins)? asks Joti.

(10)

Light (a thousand) lamps by opening plenty of Government Schools. (For the Shudra children) and illuminate the lives of the (teeming) Shudras and allied persons (in this country). Without taking any aid in the form of the '*local fund*' from any one, demonstrate to the Shudras what wonders you can work (for them). Instead of rendering such useful service to the populace, you continue to harass

them (in diverse ways), and lay the blame (unjustly) at the unfortunate people's door. You should thank the English Govt. heartily for their kindness in having exiled (the disastrous tenets of) Manu (from this land), says Joti.

(11)

You should find out (ascertain) carefully the different ways in which the Aryan Brahmins persecute the Shudras (in our country), and capture all positions of authority in all Departments. Expose the various tricks and frauds practised by the Aryan Brahmins (upon you so far) and highlight them to all the people, from time to time. Treat all the ignorant Shudras and allied people in a just and righteous manner and thus convince them of the roguery of the Brahmins. Demonstrate to the wide world that you are the worthy descendants (scions) of the Shudras, says Joti.

Poetic Selections

Human beings should never observe any distinctions based on religion or polity (political administration), but they should (rigorously) follow the path of Truth, for the (glory of) god. *All of us should embrace (clasp to our hearts) Christians, Mohammedans, Mangs and Brahmins as our own blood brothers.* There is only one Universal Religion of Truth as ordained by our Creator. Why, then, do we indulge in quarrels for different religions?

The Shudras Duped

The (Bhat) Kulkarnis instigate (incite) the (ignorant) Shudras in the villages to file suits in the Courts (to indulge in useless litigation). They advance loans to the Shudras to carry on the litigation, and receive bribes from one and all. The Brahmins denied education to the Shudras (they kept them ignorant) and, thus, wreaked vengeance on them for all time. The Brahmins should beg pardon of the Shudras (apologise to the Shudras) and impart education to them promptly, says Joti.

No Spokesman Necessary

The villainous Brahmin keeps the Mang away from himself and draws water for himself from the well (reserved for himself). Even if the Mang dies of thirst the stony-hearted Brahmin does not relent at all. The Brahmins are misanthropes, swollen with pride, epitomes of all vices, and are mischief-mongers to boot. (Though they treat the Mangs as untouchables) they accept, with alacrity, the monetary alms from the said Mangs for having officiated at their weddings (from a safe distance). They enjoy this compulsory monetary gift (alms) though taboo-ridden, says Joti.

The Brahmins are the representatives (spokesmen) of the Hindu religion, and they have exploited all the ignorant people (Shudras). These spokesmen have robbed the simple folk under the guise of religion and, thus, have feathered their own nests. *No spokesman, interceder, or intermediary is necessary in the divine court (before God), and pious devotion is truly authentic, says Joti.*

Of Truth

The Brahmins, being taboo-ridden condemn the Mang (as untouchable) but in the same breath, attend dinner-parties with the English people at which they (Brahmins) eat flesh and imbibe wine. They receive illegal gratification (from the litigants) while dispensing justice (to them), and (shamelessly) uphold the unjust cause. They kiss the common concubines merrily, but the shameless fellows (that they are) condemn the Mahars (as untouchables). (The Shudras) should designate the Aryan Brahmms as arch-haters of mankind, and hence they should be totally avoided (or rejected outright) says Joti.

Bradlaugh

Oh Englishmen! Do not keep quiet here now, but bring (Charles) Bradlaugh (a progressive, atheist Member of English Parliament) speedily to India. Catch him (Mr. Bradlaugh) by his ears and expose the wicked (teachings of the) Vedas, as also the way the Brahmins, intoxicated with power, persecute the Shudras (in India). He has no idea about the sad plight of the Shudras. The light of falsehood cannot shine (now). Preaching not based on (supported by) living experience is sheer prattle (garrullousness). Fie upon such (useless) learning! says Joti.

The Shudras Plight

The (Aryan) Brahmins were the authors of our Scriptures, and also the dispensers of justice (to us). They also were our preceptors in ancient times. Hence the pusillanimous (mean spirited) Brahmins condemned us (the Shudras and Ati-Shudras) to the meanest level and assumed greatness (superiority) for themselves. Which Brahmin should we revere (respect) and whom should we invite (to our homes) to perform religious rituals? O non-Brahmins! Kindly reflect carefully and hold all human beings in great reverence. They are the inhabitants of (had their origins in) *Sahyadri-Khand*, and (their history) is described in my 'Akhands' (poems), says Joti.

The Indian National Congress

The Brahmins have founded the (Indian) National Congress (in 1885), and have enrolled some foolish Shudras as its members. They exploit the simple (ignorant) Shudras in India, and though they are sprung of the Brahmins stock, they eat refreshments in restaurants. The crafty and selfish Aryans criticise (censure) the whites (the Englishmen), and demand high positions (posts of authority) for themselves. The Bhat Officers amass wealth by unrighteous ways, and persecute the Shudras, says Joti.

An Apology Overdue

Aryan Bhats! Please gird up your Joins and beg pardon, on bended knees, of all the world. You forbade the Shudra vassals to take education, and regarded even the shadow cast by the Ati-Shudras (the pariahs) as polluting. You should kiss (treat indulgently, kindly) the Shudras (and Ati-Shudras, the allied castes) and behave truthfully, honestly, with all human beings. Why have you become so ungrateful, O Brahmins, and why do you criticise the English people? asks Joti.

Local Fund

The poor Shudra farmer toils on his farm and manages to maintain the members of his family and his oxen (with great difficulty). He pays the *local fund* along with the land assessment, to the Government and supplements it with some corn. The English Government collects all the taxes, cesses, contributions, and opens (primary) schools only nominally (for the pupils). The Bhat (teachers) only dupe (deceive) the Shudra children while they hoodwink the English Officers with cock-and-bull (stories), says Joti.

National Congress?

Let people of all the religions be represented in the (Indian) National Congress, and make the Aryan Brahmin stand at its bar (for judgement). Their ancestors composed the spurious and fictitious books, and the equally fanciful Vedas full of fictitious and cock-and-bull stories, out of sheer enmity (for the people). They persecuted the Shudras and the Mlenchhas (Moslems) to no end and they are the most cantankerous people among all mankind. Convert the Brahmin to the noble way of Truth and righteousness and make everyone happy and contented, says Joti.

Satisfaction

The Creator created all beings and provided them with the means (to make them happy) in all possible ways. He created different things (objects, conveniences), maintained and nourished all, and filled them (their hearts) with a great joy for eternity. Of all the beings He endowed man with intelligence (an intellect, a rational faculty), so that he should conduct himself in a truthful manner, as a sample or an illustration. We should nourish (feed) and maintain those who are tortured and afflicted as also the helpless (orphans), and should show a great loving concern for them as if they are our brothers. Always be mindful of his concerns and his doings (strivings) and cherish grateful feelings for him most sincerely. To trouble others is a discreditable thing for man, and is a source of quarrels (strife) to this world. We should be ever grateful (to Him) and contented, for that is a sure sign of happiness and contentment, says Joti.

Where is Heaven?

(The Aryan Brahmins) have imagined in their own minds the eternal (ever-Iasting) peace of Heaven, with the help of fertile imagination and facile guess-work, and have described it in their sacred books. “Where is Heaven?” Has anyone ever seen it for himself? Do not be afraid (or timorous) but show that Heaven to us. (Prove to us that it, indeed, exists). I address my question to you, O quack or faith-healer (or witch-doctor). Do not indulge in fruitless arguments or subtle sophistry, dear Brahmin elder brother. Search high and low, and you will realise that *a liar will never be happy and contented*, says Joti.

Socrates

He (Socrates) was ever (eternally) happy and contented and was adorned in equanimity and a balanced mind. [The line 'They encounter difficulties immediately' may perhaps, have been transposed from the previous ‘Akhand’. I have preferred to take a portion of the last line (in the last 'Akhand') Translator] Taking his stand on the bed-rock of Truth, and holding fast to it in his mind, he spends himself in the service of the poor, the helpless and the wretched (The Sophists of Greece, in the 5th century B.C. made the good and great Socrates drink poison (hemlock), and thus, persecuted and killed him, out of sheer spite and hatred (for him). If you read the relevant books (about this sorry spectacle) you will realise that Socrates never lost the equanimity of his mind (spirit) (even when face to face with death), says Joti.

Sympathetic Understanding

‘All men are created equal’ by the Creator, and no one is inferior to anyone else. He has bestowed intelligence (intellect, rational faculty) in a varying measure (less or more) on all, but has not bestowed it on selected (chosen) individuals hereditarily. The Shudras and allied classes are in no way inferior, and they have got the same physical features (limbs etc) as the Aryans. Why have the Shudras forgotten their precious human rights, and why have they become the Ati-Shudras (the pariahs) like the beasts (of the field)? How and when did the Shudras become the vassals of the Aryans? How and when did the others become the thralls or helots (of the Aryans)? If we peruse and examine closely the spurious books written by the Aryans, we shall find that the *rapacity or greed of the Aryans was tie root-cause of the original conflict between the Aryans and the Shudras*. Man should not discriminate against any other human being on the ground of religion, and all should live in harmony and unison in this world. I wrote the book, *'The Universal Religion of Truth'* but was short of funds to print (and publish) it.

Altruism

O you Shudras! abjure drink for a few days and utilise the money thus saved to buy (useful) books. Look within your hearts (practise introspection while studying) the said books, and do not harbour enmity in your hearts (for your fellow-men). The spurious religion (preached and practised by the Aryan Brahmins) has not got the foundation of Truth, and the airs it assumes (and the superiority it claims) are a sheer exercise in futility, actuated by base selfish considerations. The Aryans forsake truth and true religion, practise religiosity and indulge in blood-shed (blood-letting) in 'wars of religion'. They presume to set a bad exempt of religious conflicts to the holy Saints, and harass the unfortunate people in the world (the Shudras and Ati-Shudras) hereditarily (discrimination practised on the basis of heredity). There cannot be real satisfaction (happiness) without altruism or sympathetic understanding. Everything else is an impediment to unity, says Joti.

The Craftiness of the Aryan Bhats

There is only one authentic Creator, and all human beings are one. *Sovereign Truth is His royal insignia*. He has created all mankind. All human beings are His children whom He protects (lovingly). *'Do unto others as you would be done by!'* and (you) should please and satisfy all in your dealings in your life (in the world). We shall have to bear the consequences of our conduct towards other human beings, says Joti.

Altruism

The Bhatjis came to India (the Land of Bali) from Iran, and conquered the Kshatriyas (the warrior-class) here, out of greed. You will find chapter and verse for this in the Vedas, that the Aryans (Brahmins) took to arms (fought as soldiers in the army). They treated the conquered (Kshatriyas) as untouchables, and shunned even their shadow (as pollution), out of sheer hatred (for them). They forbade them to take education and thus kept them ignorant. The free-hooters robbed and impoverished the inhabitants of India and styled themselves as the new lords and masters. The Mangs and Mahars were imbued with the spirit of true altruism, while the Aryan (Brahmins) were exposed and discomfited, says Joti.

Courage or Patience

A truly ethical person possesses a deep, abiding love for Truth, a pure mind and a tranquil heart, and courage Fortitude is ever wide-awake in his heart. Utilise all these precious assets in your truthful or moral conduct (in your daily life). Such an ideal person bears the ‘slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’ heroically, overcomes all calamities, and gives a helping hand to those who are oppressed and afflicted (with misfortunes) in this world. Steadfast in courage, they make all others happy and their lives are crowned with glorious success, says Joti.

The Shudras Exploited

When the Shudras in India lost courage and self-confidence, the Aryan Brahmins turned them into vassals, became imperious and wallowed in (shameless) luxuries. The timid, deluded and ignorant Shudras prostrated themselves at the Aryans' feet and thereby lost all their dignity and self-respect. Being ignorant (misguided) they fought with the Muslims and perished (in the battle) being egged on by the Aryans. The Aryan Brahmins exploited and despoiled the brave Mangs and Mahars here, and degraded them to the level of beasts, Says Joti.

The Blessed one

He who has a pure heart, who relies totally on God, whose conduct is truthful in life (the world), who has banished petty religious and communal considerations from his mind-such a one is a truly happy person (in this world) and he is truly blessed. The Aryan (Brahmin) has no courage to describe Truth (in all its majesty), and he is, indeed, calculating, thoughtless (foolish), and treacherous. Manu does not show (explain) the untrue (spurious) Vedas to the Ati-Shudras (pariahs) and refuses to exhibit them in the broad daylight (for all to see), says Joti.

Ethics

True morality or ethics is the life-breath of the Universal Religion of Man. All others are negations of Religion, says Joti. True ethics is the hall-mark of the Universal Religion of Man, and it alone is truly life-giving, says Joti. The Universal Religion of Man is founded on Truth and Ethics, and everything else is unethical, says Joti.

Self-Introspection

The Aryan Brahm ins fabricated some (religious) books relying on their queer logic, and were not afraid of even God (defied God Himself) for petty selfish considerations. They used to recite these (spurious) books in the houses of the Shudras and deceived them under the guise of religion. They never did a spot of useful work but duped all (the ignorant ones) and claimed (styled) themselves as the earth-gods. They forfeited self-introspection and, in the process, became the practitioners of mere religiosity, says Joti.

Self-Introspection

If you try to find a mark of identification between the Mang and the Aryan (Brahmin), you will perceive that both of them possess the *self-same Soul*. They are identical in most things in their food and drink and are actuated by the same desires and impulses. The Mang and the Aryan Brahmin both of them – are truly an adornment, a distinction among men, and both are identical in their behaviour. *Self-knowledge is the crown and summit of all Knowledge and nobody is an outcast (fallen from grace)* says Joti.

Self-Introspection

When all the people will come to know their human rights who will be the protector of the Aryan Bhats? The Shudras and Ati-Shudras will surely ask, How is it that all of us are condemned to a mean, despicable level while the Aryan Brahmins are elevated to a high station in the land of Bali (India)? The venomous (viper-like Vedas sting (bite) the ignorant folks here, and (having stung them) bide themselves in holes in the earth (like the serpents). If you quarrel with one another, all of you stand to lose (will come to harm or grief), and hence you should get rid of all the heretic practices. O Aryans, try to avoid the impending disaster, and embrace the Shudras and allied classes as brothers. This is an opportune time to practise some self introspection and to remember our Creator, says Joti.

The Enlightened People

He who is a *Votary of Truth* does not fear the Past, the Present or the Future (for any reason). He conducts himself in a truthful (righteous) manner at all times, and tries to make others happy in all his dealings with them. When he is no more, his children continue to be happy (like himself), and all the people (who had dealings with him) remember him with joy (and gratitude). Such a person should be called the '*enlightened o*ne' or a '*great man*' (a magnanimous man), for he is an adornment to mankind, says Joti.

[1] Khanderao of Jejuri, the family deity of the Shudras, married two wives from two different castes – *Mhalsai* from the Shudra Kunbi caste, and *Banabai* from the Shudra Dhangar (shepherd) caste. The shows that inter-marriage was a common practice among the Kulwadis and the shepherds.

[2] So we are justified in stating that the three categories of Kunbis, Malis (gardeners) and Dhangars (shepherds) belonged to one and the same caste viz. the Shudra farmers (farming community). The persons belonging to these three 'castes' were constrained (compelled) to give up farming by force of circumstances, and began to follow different trades or occupations (avocations) to earn their livelihood. Those who have some financial competence are content to cultivate their dry farms. A majority of them though unlettered, superstitious, semi-naked and starving (famished) earn a precarious living from their dry lands. Those who have nothing to fall back upon were forced to leave their homes and hearths in search of some other occupations. Some of them began to sell grass, some become timber merchants and some became cloth merchants. Some of them became petty contractors while others took up clerical jobs (under the English Govt. and were superannuated).

[3] May be a printing error. It should be 1851.